



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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No. 186.

NEW YORK, JULY 22, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS ON THE HUDSON; OR, WORKING ON THE WATER. *By HARRY MOORE.*



Bob caught the spy by the arm and stuck a pistol against his head. The other Liberty Boys ran into the water, seized the painter and began pulling the boat toward the shore.

The British struck out lustily with oars and pistol-butts.

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The Liberty Boys on the Hudson

OR,

Working on the Water.

By HARRY MOORE.

CHAPTER I.

AN INSOLEMNT OFFICER.

"Hello, Dick, I wonder what is going on now?"

"I don't know, Bob."

"Looks as though the entire crew and all the soldiers have come ashore from that ship, old fellow."

"So it does."

"Let's watch them, and see where they go."

"All right; I'm willing."

It was evening—just coming night, in fact.

It was the month of September of the year 1780.

The Revolutionary war had been going on for four years, and at the present time the British army occupied New York City; while the patriot headquarters was at West Point, about fifty miles up the Hudson River.

On the evening of which we write two youths twenty years of age stood on the Hudson River wharf, looking at the British warships that dotted the stream, and also the bay, lower down.

They were no other than Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, who were members of a famous company of youths of their own age, the company being known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick was the captain of the company, and Bob was his right hand man. They were now in New York City on a spying expedition.

They were dressed in clothing such as was worn by ordinary citizens, and there was nothing in their appearance to indicate that they were soldiers.

As we have said, they were standing on the wharf, watch-

ing the warships, when they saw a number of boats put off from one of the ships and head toward the wharf. The boats were loaded down, and as Bob had said, it looked as though the entire crew and all the soldiers were coming ashore.

The boats reached the wharf and the inmates disembarked. After tying the painters, so that the boats would not drift away, the sailors and soldiers made their way up the street.

Dick and Bob, curious to know where the British tars and soldiers were going, followed.

The party continued onward till it came to a large, hall-like building, and into this building the sailors and soldiers poured.

Dick and Bob advanced to the door and looked in.

There were perhaps forty or fifty girls and young women in the room, which was a very large one, and on a raised platform at the farther end sat several musicians, with their instruments beside them.

"I know what is up, Dick," said Bob.

"I think I do, too."

"They're going to have a big dance."

"That's about it, old fellow."

Already the soldiers and sailors were selecting partners from the girls and young women, and then the music struck up and the dancing began.

The door was left open, and others besides Dick and Bob gathered there to watch the scene within.

It was amusing to watch the sailors dancing.

They were awkward and often got tangled up with the other dancers. This occasioned considerable confusion at times.

Dick, Bob and the other spectators laughed, for it was

really funny to see the awkward maneuvers made by the sailors. The soldiers were better dancers.

"Jove, I wish I was in there," said Bob, with a sigh; "I do like to dance, and that's a fact."

"I wouldn't mind dancing a bit, myself, Bob; but I don't think I should care to get mixed up with those tars."

Bob laughed.

"One would be likely to get stepped on," he grinned.

Dick and Bob stood there, watching, for an hour or more, and then they turned away.

They had gone only a short distance when they came upon a young British officer, a lieutenant, and a girl of seventeen years. The lieutenant was trying persuade the girl to go into the hall, where the dancing was in progress, but she demurred.

"I don't want to go in there," the youths heard her say; "I could not think of dancing in such a public place."

The lieutenant uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Oh, there is no need of being so particular," he growled; "come along. We will enjoy ourselves, and it doesn't matter if we don't know anybody in there."

But the girl hung back.

"No," she said; "I am not going."

"But you must," angrily.

"Must!" There was surprise and anger in the girl's voice.

"Yes! Come along, and don't be foolish." The lieutenant took hold of the girl's arm and started to pull her in the direction of the dance hall.

This aroused the anger of the girl most effectually, and she cried:

"What do you mean, Lieutenant Colson? Let go my arm, sir! I thought you were a gentleman, or I would not have come out with you."

A snarl escaped the lips of the lieutenant. It was plain that this shot had told.

"I am a gentleman," he cried, angrily.

"Then prove it by escorting me to my home at once."

This, however, the lieutenant did not wish to do. He had made up his mind that he was going to get the girl to enter the dance hall with him, and he said, coaxingly:

"Oh, come along, Bernice; I—"

"Kindly call me Miss Guinell, Lieutenant Colson," said the girl, coldly.

"Oh, very well, Miss Guinell," in a mocking tone; "come along in here and dance with me just once, and I will then escort you to your home." His idea was that if he could get her to enter and dance one set, she would be willing to remain longer.

But he did not know with whom he was dealing. Bernice Guinell was not one who could be so easily handled. She had said that she would not enter the dance hall, and she was determined that she would not do so.

"I wish to go home," she said, quietly; "kindly escort me thither, Lieutenant Colson."

"After we have had our dance."

"No—right now!"

There was no mistaking the firmness of the girl's voice. Any one could tell that she meant what she said. The lieutenant, however, was obstinate; it angered him to think that this slip of a girl should foil him.

"If you go home now, you will have to go alone," he growled.

"Very well; I will go alone," was the prompt reply, and the girl turned and started to walk away. This the young officer would not permit, however, for he leaped forward and grasped her by the arm.

"You must not go," he said, almost fiercely; "don't be foolish. Come and dance with me, just once, and then we will return to your home."

The girl's blood was up, now. She had become very angry, and made an attempt to jerk loose from the lieutenant's hold.

"Let go my arm!" she said, in a low, intense voice.

"I will not do anything of the kind," hissed the lieutenant; "you are going to enter the hall and dance with me, that's what you are going to do! Come along."

Dick and Bob had paused near at hand, and had been silent, but interested spectators of the scene. They had hoped that the lieutenant would act the man and escort the girl to her home, but they saw that he was not going to do so; that he was going to be stubborn and ugly, and they made up their minds that they would take a hand in the affair.

They suddenly stepped forward, from where they had been standing, in a doorway. The girl saw them, and uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, sirs," she said; "will you not make this—this—fellow behave himself?"

"We certainly will do so, Miss," said Dick; then to the lieutenant he said, sternly:

"Let go the lady's arm, sir!"

A snarl of rage escaped the young officer's lips. He was hot-headed and arrogant, and thought that no one should interfere with him, unless it might be one of his superior officers.

"Go along away from here and attend to your own business, if you value your skin!" he hissed.

"Oh, we will go—presently. We are in no hurry, however, and will see to it that you do not worry this young lady. For the last time, let go of her arm!"

"All right," snarled the lieutenant; "I will let go of her arm, but not because you say for me to do so; I will do it in order that I may use it in knocking you down—you impudent loafer!"

With this, the officer let go his hold on the girl's arm and took a quick step forward and struck at Dick with all his might.

He supposed that he would not have any trouble in knocking the young stranger down. Was he not a British officer, a lieutenant in the king's army? How could an ordinary citizen, and an American one at that, stand up before him?

Such were the thoughts that were in the young officer's

mind, and so, when he found his arm brushed aside, and received a blow fair between the eyes, knocking him down, he was perhaps as astonished a man as ever lived.

Down he went, with a thud, and he lay there flat on his back, blinking up at the stars, many of which seemed to have developed a sudden and peculiar penchant for shooting this way and that.

"Good for you, Dick!" exclaimed Bob; "maybe the fool will have sense enough to treat a lady as she should be treated, in future."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed the girl; "but I fear you have gotten yourself into trouble. You had better hasten away; he is an officer in the king's army, and he will do you injury, I am afraid."

"Don't worry about me, Miss," said Dick, quietly; "I am able to take care of myself, against even an officer in the king's army."

The lieutenant was now scrambling to his feet.

He was so angry that, although he was trying to tell Dick what he was going to do to him, he could only mumble incoherently; his rage almost choked him and prevented the words from forming.

By the time he was on his feet, however, he was in better shape, and he leaped toward Dick, with a snarl of rage.

"I'll kill you, you dog!" he hissed; "I'll have your heart's blood for this!"

He struck out at the youth rapidly and fiercely, and Dick gave ground a little, till the fierceness of the onslaught wore off; then he took the offensive, and forced the lieutenant back. Dick dealt the officer several light blows, and then caught him full in the chest with a powerful blow, knocking him down again.

Indeed, so strong was the blow, that all the breath was knocked out of the lieutenant's body, and he floundered about, gasping and gurgling and making a superhuman attempt to get his breath.

At last he succeeded, and then he suddenly sat up and glared around him.

His eyes fell upon Dick.

A cry of rage escaped his lips.

His hand flew to his belt, and when it came away it clasped the butt of a pistol.

He levelled the weapon and fired.

Crack!

CHAPTER II.

IN THE COLSON HOME.

He was a few feet from Dick, and undoubtedly he would have succeeded in killing, or at least wounding the Liberty Boy, had it not been for Bernice Guinell.

She saw what was coming, and reached down and struck the lieutenant's arm up, just as he pulled the trigger.

The act saved Dick's life, perhaps.

The bullet went high above his head, and lodged in the second story of a building not far away.

"Thank you, Miss," said Dick; "I owe you my life, likely."

"But for me it would not have been in jeopardy," was the quick reply; "but, come! You must get away from here. There will be other soldiers here directly, and they will take the side of the lieutenant."

"My friend and I will escort you to your home, Miss," said Dick, quietly. "That is, if you wish us to do so."

"Yes, yes! come at once!" the girl cried.

The lieutenant threw the empty pistol down, with an exclamation of rage, and drew another. Before he could use it, however, Bob Estabrook leaped forward and wrested it from his hand and threw it out in the street. This done, he jerked the officer to his feet, and then gave him a blow on the jaw, knocking him into the gutter and rendering him unconscious.

Bob had been angered greatly by the lieutenant's attempt to kill Dick, and so he had put every ounce of his strength into the blow.

"Let us hasten away," said the girl; "people are coming!"

Indeed, the patter of footsteps could be heard and a number of persons were coming from the direction of the dance hall.

"Lead the way, Miss, and we will accompany you and see to it that you reach your home safely," said Dick.

The girl hastened along the street; so great was her fear that the young men would get into serious trouble, that she almost ran.

The youths kept close by her side, and Dick told her not to exert herself.

"We are safe from pursuit, Miss," said Dick; "take it easy. There is no need of tiring yourself out."

The girl slackened her pace somewhat, and they moved along thus till she paused in front of a building on one of the cross streets.

"This is my home," she said; "and I wish that you would come in, and permit my father to thank you for what you did for me."

"It is I who should thank you for saving my life," said Dick; "you owe us no thanks."

"I think differently, sir; will you not come in?"

The youths demurred, and said it was not worth while; but she insisted, and so they entered the house with her, and were conducted to the library, where a man of middle age sat reading.

He rose as they entered and looked first at his daughter—for he was the girl's father—and then at the two youths. It was evident that he was surprised to see his daughter in the company of a couple of strangers.

"Father, these young gentlemen rendered me a favor, and I asked them to come in, so that you could thank them," the girl said. "I do not even know your names," she added, with a smile; "so you will have to introduce yourselves."

"My name is Morgan," said Dick, "Dick Morgan, and my friend's name is Bob Benton."

"I am glad to meet you and to make your acquaintance," said the gentleman heartily, as he shook hands with them; "but where is the lieutenant?"

"I don't know where he is, father; and I can truthfully say that I don't care."

"Eh? What is that? What do you mean?"

"I mean that the lieutenant is not a gentleman, father; he tried to get me to go to a public dance hall, where sailors and soldiers were dancing, and when I refused, he was going to force me to go."

"What is that you say, Bernice?" in a voice of amazement and anger; "do you mean that Lieutenant Colson was so ungentlemanly as to act in that manner?"

"Yes; and but for these two gentlemen, who came to my assistance, he might have carried out his purpose."

"Jove, I wish I had the scoundrel here! I would cane him within an inch of his life!"

Then he shook hands again warmly with the two youths and thanked them for what they had done for his daughter.

She quickly detailed the story, and Mr. Guinell grew more and more angry and excited.

"I'm glad that you knocked the scoundrel senseless," he told Bob; "I hope that the lesson he has received will be of benefit to him."

"There is not much hope that this will be the case," said Dick; "such fellows rarely learn anything, for the reason that they think they already know it all, and that everything they do is all right."

"I think that you are right about that."

Just then there came a loud rapping on the front door.

"Who can that be?" exclaimed Mr. Guinell.

"Likely it is the lieutenant," said Bob; "it would be just about like him to come here."

Bernice turned pale.

"Oh, I hope that such is not the case!" she said; "he is no doubt in a desperate mood, and would not hesitate to kill either or both of you young gentlemen."

Dick and Bob exchanged covert smiles.

"We would have something to say about that, Miss Guinell," said Dick; "you need not fear for us, if it is the lieutenant."

"But he might have some others with him," said Mr. Guinell.

"That's so, Dick," said Bob

"Let us go into the parlor and look out of the front window and see," said Bernice.

"That is a good suggestion," said Dick.

They made their way back to the parlor, and looked out of the window.

Sure enough, there were five men standing on the front stoop.

It was not so dark but what the forms could be seen fairly well, but it was impossible to distinguish features. There could be little doubt regarding the identity of at

least one of the five, however; the lieutenant was certainly there."

"What shall we do?" asked Bernice, in a whisper.

"We will keep quiet and they will go away presently," said Mr. Guinell.

"I don't believe they will go away," said Bob; "however we can wait a while and see."

"You think they will keep on knocking at the door?" asked Bernice.

"Yes, and probably they will knock it down, if you don't open it."

"Let them do that at their peril!" said Mr. Guinell; "if they should do that, I would be justified in shooting them down. They would be housebreakers, and every man has a right to protect his home, even in such times as these."

"You are right, sir," said Dick; "and Bob and I will stand by you. The three of us will be able to beat the five redcoats, I am sure."

Mr. Guinell looked quickly and sharply at Dick.

"You are not a loyalist," he said.

"What makes you think that?" smiled Dick.

"Because you called those men redcoats."

The youth gave the man a keen, searching look, and said:

"What are you—loyalist or patriot?"

The man smiled in a quizzical manner, and then said:

"What else could a man be, in New York City at the present time, than a loyalist?" he inquired; "is not the city overrun with the British?"

"I understand," said Dick; "you are a patriot, but are not telling anyone that such is the case, so long as the British occupy the city."

"Perhaps; I will not acknowledge that this is so."

"You would be safe in doing so, so far as my friend and I are concerned."

"I am sure of that."

Rap! Rap! Rap!

The men were knocking again, and this time louder than before.

"The chances are that they are here, thinking that we came here with you, Miss Guinell," said Dick; "so perhaps it would be as well for us to slip out the back way, and then you can let them enter and search for us. When they find that we are not here, they will go away."

"Oh, but I am afraid the lieutenant might hurt father!" said Bernice; "I beg of you not to go."

"We would not go, for the world, if you do not wish us to do so," said Dick.

"I am glad of that."

At this moment there came the sound of loud pounding at the door, followed by the command:

"Open the door, in the name of the king!"

"They are getting angry and impatient," said Dick.

"I hardly know what to do," said Mr. Guinell; "if I don't open the door, they will probably break it down."

"Bob and I will conceal ourselves somewhere, and you can then go and open the door," said Dick. "Perhaps you

may be able to get them to go about their business, without having any trouble with them."

"Yonder is an alcove, curtained off, so that it is not likely to be noticed," said Bernice; "you can hide there."

"Very well."

The youths took up their position in the alcove, and then Mr. Guinell went to the door, and unbolted and opened it.

"What is wanted, gentlemen?" he asked, quickly, before they could speak.

The leader of the five was Lieutenant Colson, and he stepped quickly forward and said, in a fierce, almost hissing voice:

"We want those two cowardly rebels that came here with your daughter!"

Mr. Guinell feigned surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked; "what two rebels? No rebels came home with my daughter."

"I know better! They came here with her, and I want to see them. They are rebels, and we have come to arrest them!"

"They are not here."

"I know better; and we are going to find them. Come, men; we will search the house!"

CHAPTER III.

A BOLD SCHEME.

The five redcoats pushed their way past Mr. Guinell and entered the hallway.

"Bring a light," ordered Lieutenant Colson.

"I assure you, sir, that there is no one here other than myself and daughter," said Mr. Guinell.

"That remains to be seen. Bring a light."

There was nothing to do but obey, and so Mr. Guinell made his way toward the library, where several candles were burning.

Dick and Bob hardly knew what to do.

They felt that if they were found there it would go hard with Mr. Guinell and his daughter, but they could see no way of avoiding this.

Suddenly they felt the draperies in front of the alcove stir, and then a voice said, in a faint whisper:

"Stand perfectly still, and I think we will be able to make their search for you unavailing."

It was the voice of Bernice, and the youths breathed forth the words "Very well," in unison.

The next moment they felt a peculiar sensation—as though they were sinking through the floor.

They quickly realized the truth: They were on a sort of big dumbwaiter, and were being lowered into an underground room of some kind.

The sinking sensation continued till they had gone down perhaps a dozen or fifteen feet, and then it ceased.

"Step off the platform," whispered the girl.

The youths obeyed, and then they heard a slight creaking sound. The platform was going back up to its place.

"What kind of an arrangement is that, anyway?" asked Bob, in a whisper. He was a youth with a well-developed bump of curiosity, and he always wished to know about everything that came under his observation.

"It is a lift, something on the order of a dumbwaiter," was the reply. "It is just the size and shape of the alcove, and is operated by weights. All that is necessary is to touch a spring, and that sets the machinery at work."

"Well, well! It is lucky for us or the redcoats that you were able to get us down here out of the way."

"True! I hope they will soon go about their business."

"How does it happen that there is such an affair as this dumbwaiter in the house?" asked Dick.

"It was done to afford anyone a means of hiding in case it was necessary," was the reply. "The house was built by my father's father, and so he knows all about it."

"I see."

"Listen!" whispered Bob.

The sound of trampling feet was heard over their heads.

"They are looking in the parlor now," said Dick.

The trampling of feet was heard for several minutes, and then it ceased.

"They have left the room," said Dick. "Now we can go back up again."

"I judge that it will be safe," was the girl's reply, "and then, if they should attempt to injure father, you will be there to protect him."

"You are right."

Bernice touched the spring, and a creaking sound was heard.

A few moments later the girl whispered:

"Step onto the platform."

The youths did as told, and Bernice followed; then the platform began moving upward, slowly and steadily.

Presently it came to a stop, and they were back in the alcove in the parlor.

"We had better stay here," whispered the girl. "They might come into this room again before leaving the house."

"Very well, Miss Guinell."

Nearly half an hour passed, and then the sound of footsteps were heard coming along the hall.

At the door of the parlor the sound ceased, and the voice of Lieutenant Colson asked:

"Where is Bernice?"

The girl started, and clutched Dick's arm. It was evident that she was frightened. The question might lead to trouble for all, for the lieutenant might demand to know where the girl was, and this would disconcert Mr. Guinell, who undoubtedly guessed where she was, but would not disclose her whereabouts to the redcoats.

"I don't know where Bernice is," replied Mr. Guinell. "She may have stepped over to see our next-door neighbor."

"Humph!" in the lieutenant's voice. "Well, you will need to be careful, Mr. Guinell. From now on you will be

watched closely, for you will be suspected of having harbored rebels. Of course, I, being interested in your daughter, will do all I can for you, but you will have to be very careful."

"Thank you," said Mr. Guinell.

Then the sound of trampling feet was heard again, and presently the opening and closing of the front door. The redcoats had gone.

The next moment Mr. Guinell entered the room, carrying a candle.

"Come forth," he said. "The coast is clear."

Bernice and the Liberty Boys stepped forth from the alcove.

"I guessed what had become of you," Mr. Guinell said, smiling. "I was afraid that you might not think of doing what you did, Bernice."

"I thought of it right away, father."

They talked a few minutes, and then Dick and Bob said they must be going.

"Why not remain all night?" Mr. Guinell asked.

"We have a room at one of the taverns," replied Dick, "and, too, we have some work to do yet to-night."

"Am I right in supposing that you two are in the city on a spying expedition?" the man asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I have this to say, that you are in danger all the time you are here, and that if you should be close pressed, and do not know which way to turn, come here to us. We will secrete you, and help you all we can."

"Thank you, Mr. Guinell. We will remember, and should we get in a tight place we will come here to you."

"Do so; you will meet with a warm welcome."

"Yes, indeed," from Bernice.

"I think we had better go out the back way," said Dick. "It is possible that the redcoats may watch the front of the building a while, at least, and in that case they would see us, which would be bad for you."

"Very well. I will conduct you out the rear way."

Dick and Bob then bade Bernice good-night, and followed Mr. Guinell, who led the way to the back door. This he opened, and after shaking hands with him and bidding him good-night, the two took their departure.

They were soon making their way up the alley, and when they came to the street they turned and walked in the direction of the dance hall, where the soldiers and sailors were dancing.

When they got there they found that a crowd was standing about the doorway, as had been the case when they were there before.

The two youths advanced till they were on the outskirts of the crowd, and paused.

"They seem to be having a good time in there," said a man, addressing Dick.

"Yes," the youth replied.

"It gives them a change from the dull routine of life on shipboard, and makes them less likely to become sulky and mutinous, I judge," the man continued.

"Likely," agreed Dick. "Is this a common thing—the dancing?"

"It is of every night occurrence; you see, the crews and soldiers of the ships take turn about, until the rounds of all the vessels have been made."

"So that's the way they do, is it?"

"Yes; they begin down in the bay, and the crews of the ships come ashore, each night, in rotation, according to their location. The crew from the vessel lying next on the north will come ashore to-morrow night."

"That is a very good plan," said Bob.

"Oh, yes; it is satisfactory to all, and is perfectly just and fair."

The youths watched the scene within, through the open doorway, for a while longer, and then they turned and walked slowly away.

"Say, Bob, I have a scheme," said Dick, when they were out of earshot of the men gathered around the doorway of the dance hall.

"I'm glad of it, if it promises anything in the way of excitement, Dick."

"Well, it promises plenty in the way of excitement."

"Let's hear what the scheme is, then, Dick."

"All right. You heard what that man said, back yonder."

"Yes."

"Well, my scheme is to come down here some night, with our Liberty Boys, and capture one of the vessels, while the crew is ashore, dancing."

Bob uttered an exclamation.

"Great guns, Dick, that is just the thing!" he cried.

"You think the plan a good one, then?"

"I do, old fellow!"

"Good! Then let's go down to the riverside and see if we can learn anything that will be of value to us."

They walked down to the shore, and stood there on the wharf, gazing out over the water at the ships, which were dimly visible, owing to the lanterns hanging in the rigging.

They counted, and found that there were only seven vessels lying north of the one that the sailors and soldiers had come ashore from that evening.

"We will come down here in the morning, Bob, and decide upon which vessel to try to capture."

"That will be a good plan, Dick; we don't want to try to capture a big warship."

"No; we want to capture a schooner, or a sloop-of-war."

"Yes; a vessel that we boys can handle after we have captured it."

"You are right; for I have made up my mind to do some work on the water."

"That would be fine, old fellow."

"If we can capture a sloop-of-war we will be in a position to do some good work; we will guard the Hudson, and drive the British back in case they try to ascend the river."

They discussed the matter quite a while, and then turned

and made their way back in the direction of the tavern where they were staying.

They soon arrived there, and went at once to their room.

Here they discussed their plans a few minutes, and then went to sleep.

They were up early next morning, and after breakfast they sallied forth.

They went down to the river, and stood on the wharf.

They easily identified the ship that the sailors and soldiers had come off of that were in the dance hall the night before, and then they carefully sized up the other vessels that lay higher up the stream.

There were seven, and the fourth one from the farthest one north was a neat-looking sloop-of-war.

"That's the vessel we want, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes; and as it will be four nights before its crew will go ashore, we will have plenty of time to lay our plans, and get here with the boys, ready to make the capture."

"Yes; so we will."

CHAPTER IV.

AT WORK.

On the fourth night from the one just told about, a party of one hundred young men stood on the shore of the Hudson, on the west side of the stream, near Weehawken.

These youths were the Liberty Boys.

Two boats lay in the water, at the youths' feet, and they were getting ready to make the daring attempt to capture the sloop-of-war.

Dick Slater now gave the order for some of the youths to get into the boats.

The Liberty Boys obeyed, and soon the two boats were loaded down. Each held ten, besides two men at the oars, making a dozen in all.

"You boys stay here," said Dick, "and if we can capture the sloop we will sail it up here and send the boats ashore for you."

"All right," replied one. "We will be here when you come."

Then the boats moved away downstream.

The youths kept close to the west shore, for they did not want to risk being discovered by the British on the three vessels that they had to pass before coming to the sloop.

They counted the ships, and when they had passed three they headed diagonally across the stream.

As they drew near the sloop, they rowed carefully, and advanced very cautiously.

Dick knew there would be sentinels on the deck of the vessel, and it would not do to venture too near until after the sentinels had been taken care of. This work he was going to attend to himself, with Bob's help.

Presently he gave the signal to stop rowing.

The youths did so.

"Now hold the boats here, as nearly as possible, till you hear me signal you from the sloop," he said.

Then he and Bob silently let themselves over the side of the boat, one on each side, to keep it from tipping, and struck out toward the sloop.

Both youths were expert swimmers, and could swim better with their clothes on than most persons could with nothing to weigh them down.

They swam noiselessly, for they did not want that their presence should be discovered by either of the sentinels on the deck of the sloop.

They were not long in reaching a point immediately under the projecting stern of the vessel.

Here they felt around, and suddenly a thrill of delight went over Dick. His hand had touched a rope that was hanging from the railing of the sloop.

"We are all right, Bob," he whispered. "Here is a rope. I will go up first, and then you come."

"All right, Dick."

The Liberty Boy climbed the rope, hand over hand, and at last was high enough so that he could grasp the rail. He did this, and then remained there, silent and motionless, trying to get the sentinel located.

He heard footsteps on the deck, and soon he noted the outlines of a human form coming toward him. He did not believe the sentinel could see him, so he remained where he was.

He was right; the sentinel did not see him or suspect that anyone was there, and he turned and walked back in the direction from which he had just come.

Dick seized upon the opportunity, and climbed softly over the rail. He looked down, and could make out the dark outlines of Bob's form as the youth climbed toward the rail.

A minute later Bob stood on the deck beside Dick.

"Now what, old fellow?" Bob breathed.

The sentinel will be back here in a few minutes, Bob; we will leap upon him and make a prisoner of him. I will try to get him by the throat, so that he will not be able to cry out and give the alarm."

"All right; we ought to be able to get him without his getting a chance to cry out."

"Sh!" cautioned Dick at this juncture. "He's coming now."

Sure enough, they heard the measured tread of the sentinel, and the sound grew louder and plainer.

Then the sentinel's form was seen dimly outlined against the light made by the lanterns in the rigging, and the youths crouched low and waited for the moment when the attack should be made.

The sentinel advanced to within ten feet of the youths, and then turned and started back.

This was the moment the Liberty Boys were waiting for.

They leaped forward with the speed and silence of panthers, and while Bob threw his arms around the redcoat's

body, pinioning his arms, Dick seized the fellow by the throat, compressing it to such an extent as to make it impossible for him to cry out.

The sentinel attempted to struggle, but could not do anything; he also tried to cry out, but a gasping gurgle that could not have been heard a dozen feet was all that resulted.

The two youths quickly bound the sentinel and gagged him, and then they made their way to the other end of the sloop.

They expected to find another sentinel there, but were agreeably disappointed. The one had been doing the work alone.

This made things easier for the Liberty Boys, and they went to the rail, and Dick gave utterance to a cautious whistle—the signal agreed upon.

Soon the two boats were lying alongside the sloop, and Dick lowered a rope-ladder that was fastened to the rail.

The Liberty Boys then climbed aboard.

When the youths were all on board and the boats had been tied so that they would not drift away they went to the cabin, and entered.

They found only three soldiers there, and these were quickly made prisoners, and confined in one of the state-rooms, where their yells would be smothered in case they gave vent to any.

This done, the youths went out on deck again, and proceeded to get the sloop under way.

There were a dozen at least among the youths who knew how to handle a vessel almost as well as an old sailor, and they told Dick that they were ready for work whenever he said the word.

"The first thing to do is to get those lanterns down," said Dick. "The men on the other ships will see you if you go to spreading the sails with the lanterns where they are."

"Won't they suspect that something is wrong when they see the lanterns being taken down?" asked Bob.

"I don't think so; still, if they should do so, they will not be able to get over here to investigate before we will be moving away."

"True. Well, come along, three of you boys, and we will take those lanterns down."

Bob and three of the youths climbed into the rigging and brought the lanterns down and extinguished the lights.

Scarcely had they done so when there came a hail from one of the other vessels. It lay only a little more than a quarter of a mile distant, and the voice could be heard plainly.

"Hello, why did you take the lanterns down?" was the query.

Dick was ready-witted, and he at once shouted back:

"We did it for a joke; we want to see if the men will be fooled and not know where to look for us when they come back."

"Oh, that's boy's play; light the lanterns again."

"All right, if you say so; but I shouldn't think you would object to a little practical joke like that."

"There is no sense in playing any such joke."

Dick had given the youths orders to get to work, the instant the lanterns were extinguished, and they were already in the rigging, setting the sails. One of the youths, the best seaman of all, had taken his place at the wheel.

The wind was just right for the youths' purposes. It was from the south, and this would give them a chance to sail the sloop up the stream.

Before the youths had succeeded in getting the sails set, however, there came the sound of oars, and a voice called out:

"The sloop ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" called back Dick.

"Why have you not relighted the lanterns, as you were ordered to do?"

"They were almost empty, sir," replied Dick, "and they are being refilled with oil."

"Bosh! I think you are trying to evade obeying orders," and I am going to come aboard and see about this matter!"

"Very well, sir; you will find that you are mistaken," replied Dick.

Then he turned to the half-dozen Liberty Boys who stood near at hand, and said:

"Be ready to seize that fellow when he comes on board. We will make a prisoner of him and carry him away—and any more of them that may come aboard."

"So we will."

"Throw us a ladder," called out the voice.

It sounded from the other side of the sloop from the one on which the youths had come aboard. This was well, for had the redcoats discovered the presence of the two boats, their suspicions would have been aroused at once, and they would not have ventured to come on board.

Dick found a rope ladder, which was fastened to the rail, and he tossed the loose end down.

"There you are," he called out.

"All right; I'm coming on board, and I want that you shall have some of those lanterns lighted by the time my head shows above the rail. If such is not the case then it will go hard with you!"

Of course, the youths did not light any of the lanterns; they were going to make a prisoner of the officer, and of any more of the redcoats that might climb up before the sloop got under way.

They listened intently, and heard the redcoat toiling up the ladder, muttering angrily as he came.

Presently his head appeared above the rail; the youths could just discern it in the darkness.

"No light on deck, eh?" the officer snarled. "Well, you will be sorry for this! You will wish that you had not disobeyed orders before I get through with you!"

He clambered clumsily over the rail, and scarcely had his feet touched the deck before he was seized by the Liberty Boys.

He kicked and struggled, and did his utmost to get free, but could not; neither could he cry out, for Dick had seized

him by the throat, and thus effectually smothered all his cries in his throat.

They quickly bound the officer and gagged him, and then Dick called down to the redcoats in the boat:

"Come up here, one of you."

"All right," was the reply.

Then they heard another redcoat climbing the ladder.

The youths got ready to treat him the same way they had treated the officer.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE HUDSON.

The man's head appeared above the rail, presently, and the youths got ready to receive him.

He clambered over the rail, and was seized and bound and gagged in a jiffy.

"I wonder how many more there are down there?" said Dick, in a whisper.

"I don't know," replied Bob.

"I might as well call them up, one after the other," he said. "At least until the boys have the sails all spread, and then we will get away from here as rapidly as possible."

"That will be a good plan," agreed Bob.

Dick leaned over the rail and called down to the redcoats:

"Another one of you come up here."

"Aye, aye, sir!" was the reply.

They heard a man climbing the ladder immediately afterward.

"Get ready to receive him," whispered Dick.

"Oh, we'll receive him in good shape," was Bob's reply.

The man was soon clambering over the rail, and the youths seized and bound and gagged him.

They did so without his making an outcry, for Dick had got him by the throat.

Just as they finished this, one of the boys who had been up in the rigging, setting sail, came to Dick with the information that all was ready.

"Very well; we will get away from here in a hurry, then," the youth said.

He at once gave orders for the anchor to be raised, and the youths got it up as quickly as possible.

The redcoats down in the boat, of whom there were three, knew that something was going on out of the way, and they called up and asked what it was. Of course, they received no answer.

As soon as the youths had got the anchor up, the Liberty Boy at the wheel went to work, and soon had the vessel headed up the stream.

The wind was astern, and so the sloop made good headway.

The men in the boat that had been alongside the sloop set up a yell that was heard aboard the other warships that

were near at hand, and soon there was considerable excitement.

The soldiers on the warships knew that something out of the way was happening, and it did not take them long to learn that the sloop had been captured and was being sailed away—the redcoats in the boat having carried this news to them.

Then the excitement grew deeper, and attempts were made to locate the sloop.

This was difficult, however, for the night was dark, and there were no lights on her deck.

The guns began to boom from the decks of the warships, and the solid shot spattered in the water, at random, though several came near the sloop.

The Liberty Boys were jubilant.

They were getting safely away with the sloop-of-war.

It did not matter that there was danger that they might be sent to the bottom by a shot from one of the warships; they were happy anyhow, because of the success that had attended their efforts so far.

On up the Hudson the sloop sailed.

The excitement over the affair had extended down the river and out into the bay, to all the warships there, and even in the city the people were racing about, asking questions.

Many thought the city was being attacked by the patriots, or by a fleet from the ocean—it having been stated a number of times that the French fleet was coming to aid the patriots.

Finally the news got around that a party of patriots had captured a sloop-of-war and was making away with it, and this occasioned no end of talk.

"It is just such an exploit as one would look for from that company of young fellows known as The Liberty Boys," said one man.

"That's so," from another, "and it would not surprise me if it turned out that they are the ones who did the work."

"I hardly think they will be able to get clear away."

"I don't know about that; it is dark, and they will have a good chance to escape up the river."

"You are right; and the wind is right for them."

"So it is; the only chance the British have is in hitting the sloop with a random cannon ball, and sinking it."

"That would be only an accident, and one that would not happen once in a hundred years."

"True."

Several of the smaller war vessels weighed anchor, set sails, and started up the Hudson in pursuit of the sloop-of-war.

The commanders thought it possible that they might out-sail the sloop and recapture it.

They kept firing shots from the bowchasers, but very few of the balls came anywhere near the fugitive vessel.

The Liberty Boys never thought of the danger from these shots.

They were too busy thinking of the success that had attended their efforts at capturing the sloop.

When the little vessel came opposite Weehawken it hove to, and the boats were sent ashore.

The other Liberty Boys were soon aboard, and then the sloop sailed on up the stream.

The British warships that were in pursuit had gained considerable, and the booming of the cannon sounded loud indeed.

It was so dark, however, that the danger from the cannon balls was slight.

It transpired that the sloop was a fast sailer.

It gradually drew away from the warships.

The sound of the guns grew less and less loud, and the youths knew they were leaving the enemy astern.

"We are all right," cried Bob, jubilantly. "We have captured the sloop and got safely away with it, Dick."

"So it would seem, Bob."

"Oh, there is no doubt about it."

"We mustn't crow too loudly before we are out of the timber."

"Oh, we are out of the timber now."

"I don't know about that."

The occasional splash of a cannon ball was heard for a while after that, and then was not heard any more. The noise made by the guns sounded so far away and indistinct compared to what had been the case that the youths made up their minds they were out of range.

It was fortunate for the Liberty Boys that the youth at the wheel was one who had worked on a schooner that plied between Albany and New York, and who was, as a consequence, perfectly familiar with every crook and turn of the river. He guided the sloop by keeping watch of the tops of the hills and palisades, and he managed to keep the vessel in the middle of the stream, dark though it was.

The fact that this youth was so familiar with the stream made Dick decide to continue on up the river to West Point. He wished to report to General Washington.

They sailed up the stream till they came opposite the fort at West Point, and then they brought the sloop up in the wind, dropped the anchor, and furled the sails.

"We will remain here till morning, and then will go ashore and make our report to the commander-in-chief," said Dick.

This was satisfactory.

The youths were well pleased, anyway, and felt that they would come in for praise from General Washington.

Certainly they were entitled to think that they would be praised.

When morning came the youths ate breakfast on board the sloop, for they found plenty of provisions.

After breakfast Dick and Bob got in a boat and went ashore.

They landed on the east shore and made their way to the home of Beverly Robinson, at whose house the patriot commander-in-chief had his headquarters.

The youths were soon in the house, and a little later were shown into the commander-in-chief's private room, which overlooked the Hudson.

General Washington gave the youths a pleasant greeting. "I am indeed glad to see you, my boys," he said. Then he shook hands with them most heartily.

"Now, tell me," he said, "what vessel is that out there in the river, and how happens it that you came ashore from it?"

Dick hastened to tell the commander-in-chief the story of the capture of the British sloop-of-war, and the great man was delighted. He had been away when Dick asked permission to go down and make the attempt to capture the vessel, and General Greene had given the youths the permission, and had then forgotten to tell General Washington when he came back to headquarters.

"And that is a British sloop-of-war!" the general exclaimed. "Well, I am delighted, boys! You have done an exceedingly clever and daring thing in capturing the vessel."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick. "And now that we have the sloop, we are going to ask you to let us have command of it for awhile. We wish to do some work on the water."

"You have my permission, Dick. Indeed, it would not be right to withhold it."

"Thank you. We will keep a sharp watch over the lower Hudson, and if the British try to come up this way we will hold them in check till you can get ready to receive them."

"Be careful, my boy, and don't let them get the vessel away from you."

"We will see to it that they do not do so, sir."

"You may take your prisoners over to the fort, and turn them over to the officer in charge there, Dick."

"Very well, sir."

General Greene came in at this juncture, and he congratulated the youths heartily on their success in capturing the British vessel.

"I gave them permission to try while you were away, your excellency," he said. "I did not think they could succeed, but they seem to have done so."

"Yes, there is the proof of it out there in the river."

"I am glad that you did succeed, Dick," said General Greene. "We may find considerable use for the sloop."

"Yes, I think it may be made of great use and value to us," said General Washington.

They talked quite a while, and then Dick and Bob took their departure.

They went back down to the river, got into the boat and rowed back to the sloop.

They boarded it, and then Dick called the youths up and told them that they were to remain on board the vessel.

"We are going to work on the water instead of on shore, for a while," he said.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "That suits me. It will be a change."

"So it will," agreed Dick.

It was evident that the youths were delighted.

To be on the Hudson, sailing up and down the beautiful stream, on the sloop that they had captured, would be the greatest sport in the world for the Liberty Boys.

There would be danger in the work they were going to do, but that did not matter. The Liberty Boys thrived and grew fat on dangers that would have appalled the ordinary run of men.

When Dick had explained everything to the youths, he said :

"Now get ready to fire a salute, boys. We are going to do honor to the commander-in-chief and at the same time dedicate the vessel to the patriot cause."

This suited the boys, and they got to work.

There were five cannon on board—two on either side and one at the stern.

The youths manned these guns, and then, at the word from Dick, fired them off as a salute.

Boom-m-m-m-m-m-m!

Then the Liberty Boys waved their hats and gave three cheers, after which they began setting the sails.

At the same time Dick sent the redcoat prisoners ashore in one of the boats, and the youths who had attended to this got back just as the sloop was ready to sail.

A few minutes later the vessel swung around and moved slowly and gracefully down the stream.

Generals Washington and Greene were watching from the window, and the former said, with a smile :

"Those Liberty Boys are a brave and dashing lot, General Greene."

"Indeed they are, sir," was the reply. "They have done a great deal of good work for the patriot cause, and they will do a great deal more before the war ends, I am sure."

"Yes, so am I."

CHAPTER VI.

A WARNING.

The sloop went sailing down the Hudson, with the Liberty Boys on board.

They were in high spirits.

They talked and laughed, and were jolly indeed.

"Reload the guns, boys," ordered Dick.

They proceeded to do so, at once.

Then Dick detailed certain of the youths to handle the cannon.

Some were better gunners than others, and he detailed these to handle the pieces.

Some of the youths were better sailors than the others, and these he detailed to the work of handling the sails.

There were three youths who were familiar with every crook and turn of the Hudson from Albany to New York, and these Dick named as helmsmen. The only work they would have to do, unless in a combat, would be to handle the wheel.

The other youths, who were not good gunners or sailors, were told to hold themselves in readiness, always, to fight at the signal, and to lend a hand at anything else that came up.

On down the stream the vessel sailed.

At each bend in the river, the youths looked ahead eagerly.

They did not know but they might see one or more warships coming up the stream, and it would be necessary to turn about and retreat.

It was a beautiful day.

The youths felt that they could easily defeat two ordinary warships, so great was their elation over the way affairs were going.

They were cautious, however, and did not for one moment relax their vigilance.

They kept a sharp lookout down the stream.

On they sailed.

Around bend after bend they went. The scenery was grand, and the youths saw and appreciated it, even though they were soldiers and had their thoughts on fighting battles with the British.

At last they rounded a bend and saw a stretch of nearly three miles ahead of them.

Away down toward the end of this straight stretch of water were two ships. That they were warships was evident, as there were no other vessels that would be there.

"Hello, what shall we do now, Dick?" asked Bob.

Dick did not answer right away. He gazed at the ships, and looked thoughtful.

"I guess that we had better turn around and head back up the river," he said, presently.

Then he gave the order.

The vessel was soon headed about, and was making its way slowly back in the direction from which it had come.

As it was now going against the wind, it was necessary to tack.

It was as necessary for the British ships to tack, however, so there was no advantage for the latter in this state of affairs.

The Liberty Boys were not long in learning that the British ships were a bit faster than the sloop, and that there was danger that they might be overtaken, if the race was to continue for a considerable length of time.

"Oh, well, they can't catch us," said Bob. "We will get back past West Point before they can draw near us, and the soldiers will give it to the redcoats from the cannon in the fort."

"I think you are right, Bob."

It seemed likely that Bob's idea was the correct one. The British warships gained, but it was only slowly, and the youths were confident that they could easily get back to West Point before the enemy could get near them.

"They may get close enough to send a few cannon balls our way," said Dick, "but we will have to risk that."

"Oh, we won't mind a little thing like that," grinned Bob.

It was evident that none of the youths were greatly dismayed by the prospect.

The race went on for an hour at least, and by that time the British ships had gained a mile. Another hour, and

they were close enough so that they could try what virtue there was in their cannon.

The balls began to fly right away, and some of them came pretty close to the little vessel.

The Liberty Boys did not seem to mind it, however. They laughed and joked just the same as though nothing of the kind was taking place.

Dick looked at the two warships with a keen and calculating gaze.

"I believe the gun will carry the distance," he said. "Get ready and open on the enemy, boys."

The youths manned the stern gun, and soon were firing it as rapidly as was possible.

They fired shot after shot, and finally one cut through the rigging of one of the warships, bringing down a piece of a spar and entangling the sails to such an extent as to make the ship's progress much slower.

This enraged the redcoats, evidently, for they fired more frequently than ever; but although the cannon balls struck near the sloop many times, not one hit the vessel.

The Liberty Boys, however, were better gunners than their enemies, for they managed to put a cannon ball into the rigging of the other warship, crippling its sails to such an extent as to cause it to slacken speed materially.

Indeed, so much were the two vessels crippled, in so far as speed was concerned, that they gave up the chase, and came to a stop.

The Liberty Boys noted this, and brought the sloop up in the wind soon afterward. They were just out of range of the enemies' guns, and were willing to remain there and see what the British would do.

This was a simple and easy matter, and it soon became monotonous. The Liberty Boys liked action.

"I almost wish we hadn't crippled their sails," said Bob. "Then they would have kept on following us. That was a great deal more fun than this."

"You are never satisfied, Bob," said Dick.

"Well, I hate this quiet life, old man. I want action, excitement. I want to be up and doing."

"Well, what is the matter with our running back down the river a little way, and opening fire on the warships?"

"That will suit me!" cried Bob.

The other boys were in for this, the same as Bob was, and so the sloop was turned and once more started down the stream.

Doubtless the British were amazed by the spectacle of the little sloop-of-war heading down toward them so bravely. They would not have been so surprised, however, had they known that the patriots on board the little vessel were the Liberty Boys, of whom they had heard many wonderful stories.

Presently the British gunners opened fire, and the Liberty Boys brought the sloop about and returned the fire.

It was rather comical, to say the least, to see the little sloop lying there, battling with the two large warships.

The Liberty Boys could fire only one shot to four or five

by the British, but the youths made the one shot count for as much as the greater number of the enemy.

They succeeded in cutting two spars, near their tops, and in putting several holes in the sails.

On the part of the youths, they sustained no injury whatever.

Several cannon balls struck close to the sloop, but did not hit it.

At last, disgusted, probably, by their inability to damage their saucy little antagonist, the British warships moved away downstream.

Bob Estabrook shouted aloud in delight.

"Hurrah!" he yelled. "We have whipped two of the biggest of the British warships! Hurrah! I tell you we are the boys that can do the work, and we can do as good work on the water as on the land."

"So we can," said Mark Morrison.

The Liberty Boys lost no time in following.

They wished to see where the warships were going. Then, too, they thought that they might get a few more shots at them.

The British ships disappeared around a bend, and the Liberty Boys kept right on; they did not think of such a thing as that the British would bring their vessels to a stop and wait for the sloop to put in an appearance.

On the sloop sailed, and when it was within a quarter of a mile of the bend the youths suddenly caught sight of a girl standing on a large rock on the west shore, waving a handkerchief frantically.

"See the girl yonder, Dick," exclaimed Bob. "I wonder what she wants?"

"I don't know; but it seems to me that she wants us to stop."

"I guess that you are right."

Dick watched the girl a few moments longer, and then gave the order for the sloop to be brought to.

This was done, and by the time the vessel came to a stop, the girl was seen coming out toward the sloop, in a boat.

Closer and closer she came, and when she got near enough so that her face could be seen, the youths noted that she was very pretty.

She handled the oars like one used to it from childhood, and when she was within a few yards of the sloop's side, she ceased rowing, and glanced up at the eager faces along the sloop's rail.

"Don't sail around the bend," she called out. "The British warships are lying in wait for you there, and will sink your vessel, if you do!"

CHAPTER VII.

ONE AGAINST FOUR.

"Ha, so that is what the British were wanting to do, eh?" exclaimed Dick.

Then he added:

"Will you come aboard, miss?"

"It isn't worth while, sir. I live right over yonder, half a mile from the river, so may as well go back."

"We owe you thanks for what you have done for us, miss," said Dick.

"Not at all. I am a patriot, and am glad that I was able to give you some information that was of benefit to you."

"Do you mind telling us your name? We wish to know who our benefactress is."

"My name is Daisy Dunwald."

"Jove, isn't she pretty, though!" said George Harper to Bob Estabrook.

"Pretty as a picture, George," was the reply. "You had better go in and win her."

"I won't have any chance. I doubt if I ever see her again."

"Oh, you may."

Of course, the two spoke so low that the girl could not hear them.

"Well, Miss Dunwald, you have the thanks of the Liberty Boys for what you have done, and I hope that we may be able to repay you in some way, some day."

"It will be all right if you do not do so."

Then she waved her hand and rowed back toward the shore.

"Well, what shall we do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I judge that we had better turn around and beat back up the river a ways, Bob."

"Perhaps so; the redcoats might take a sudden notion to come around and see what we are doing."

"That's so."

Dick gave the order, and the sloop was soon beating back up the river, against the wind.

When it had gone half a mile, Dick ordered that it be brought to a stop, and this was done.

"We will stay here and wait till the British make some kind of a move," said Dick.

"Say, let me go ashore and to the top of the headland, yonder, and keep watch on the British," said George Harper, addressing Dick.

Bob Estabrook snickered, and the other youths looked at him wonderingly and questioningly, with the exception of George, who gave him a gently reproofing look.

"What are you laughing at, Bob?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Say, George, I can't keep it," grinned Bob; then to the youths he added: "He said that the girl that was here in the boat was as pretty as a picture, and—well, I guess now you know why he wants to go ashore and take the position of lookout."

"Yes, but he is more likely to look out for the girl than for the redcoats," said Sam Sanderson; "so I think that some one else had better go."

"Two of you go, then," said Dick; "you go along with George, Sam."

"All right!"

"Say, don't try to cut George out," grinned Bob; "that wouldn't be fair."

"No danger of that," from Sam; "I have a girl of my own at home."

"That makes George feel better, I'll wager," said Bob.

The two got into one of the boats and rowed to the shore, at the point nearest to the headland. Here they disembarked and after tying the painter, they climbed the steep bluff, and at last stood on the headland.

Sure enough, there were the two British warships.

They were just below the headland, and it was evident that had the sloop sailed around into sight, it would have been sunk, for at such short range the British gunners would have been able to hit the mark.

"The girl saved us the loss of the sloop, Sam," said George.

"I guess you are right," was the reply.

"No doubt of it; and now, what shall we do—simply sit here and watch the warships till they make some kind of a move?"

"I guess that is all we are expected to do. But, George, if you like, you may go over to the girl's home and make her acquaintance. I can watch the ships as well alone as with you here."

"All right, Sam," said George, his face lighting up; "I am much obliged."

"That's all right; you would do as much for me."

"Indeed I would."

George took his departure, at once.

He headed straight toward the house, which he could see from the top of the headland.

As he drew near the house, however, he began to ask himself what excuse he would give for coming there.

"I will have to give some excuse," he told himself; "I can't tell the girl right out that I have come simply for the purpose of making her acquaintance."

He was still puzzling over this problem, and was worrying considerably, when the matter was settled for him.

He suddenly heard screams, coming from the direction of the house.

"Hello, I wonder what the trouble is?" he asked himself.

Then he broke into a run.

He dashed straight toward the house.

He felt that it was providential, almost, that he had come to this place just at this time.

"It would seem almost as though it was intended that I should be here to protect the girl," he told himself.

He dashed onward, and was soon in the yard.

He saw what had caused the scream he had heard.

In the yard in front of the house were a man, a woman and a girl—Daisy Dunwald, the girl who had warned the Liberty Boys that the warships were just around the headland.

There were also four redcoats, and the latter had pistols out and leveled at the farmer, who was Daisy's father, so George judged.

Instantly George drew a pair of pistols.

As he came in sight Daisy gave utterance to an exclama-

mation—of mingled delight and fear, the youth thought. It was probable that she hoped the newcomer might help them, yet she feared that he could not do so, there being four against him.

But George Harper, like the majority of the Liberty Boys, was an extraordinary youth when it came to fighting.

Odds had no terrors for him.

The instant Daisy uttered the exclamation the redcoats realized that some one was coming, and they whirled to face the newcomer.

Seeing that there was only one, and that one a youth, the redcoats looked relieved.

"'Ello, who har you?" cried one, evidently the leader.

"A man," was the calm reply. "What are you doing here?"

Mr. Dunwald and his wife, and Daisy, stared at the youth with looks of commingled admiration and fear. It was evident that they admired his bravery in facing the four redcoats, but feared he would be killed.

George, however, was not afraid. Indeed, if the truth had been known, he was glad to be there, pitted against four men. It would give him a chance to show the girl that he was brave, and this, he felt, would arouse her admiration, and later on she might learn to love him.

The redcoats were evidently surprised to hear the youth talk so boldly and fearlessly, for they looked surprised, and the leader said:

"Hi don't know has it is hany of your business what we har doing 'ere."

"That may be true; still, having heard the lady scream, and having hastened to the spot, I think I have a right to know what is going on."

"Bah! You 'ave no right to ask any questions at all, sonny; you 'ad better run along hif you don't want to get into trouble."

"They were threatening to shoot father if he did not tell them where he had money hidden," said Daisy; "that was when I screamed."

"And I have no money hidden," said Mr. Dunwald.

"We know better," said the leader of the redcoats; "you 'ave money 'idden around 'ere somewhere, and we want you to tell us where."

"It is an impossibility," Mr. Dunwald said; "I have no money."

"We don't believe you," the redcoat said; "and we will hattend to your case soon; but first we will settle with this saucy young gamecock," glaring fiercely at George. Then to the youth he went on:

"Put the pistols away and then make tracks, young fellow. Hif you don't, we will put some bullets through you!"

George shook his head.

"I couldn't think of it," he said, calmly.

"But you must think of it. You har not wanted 'ere."

"Not by you, perhaps. The others don't object to my presence, I judge."

"Perhaps you had better go," said Daisy, the accents of fear showing in her voice.

But George shook his head.

"The girl is telling you what is for your hown good," said the redcoat; "we don't want to 'urt you, but hif you hinsist on staying 'ere, and hinderfing, we will 'ave to 'urt you."

"I am not going," was George's reply.

"Hi give you fair warning," said the redcoat; "Hi am going to count to ten, and hif you 'ave not started away by that time, we will shoot you down."

There was a grimness in his voice that showed he meant what he said, but George did not intend to go; he would stay and fight the four of them. He had taken a great liking to Daisy, and was more than willing to hazard his life in her protection.

"You needn't mind counting," he said; "I am not going."

"Hi'll give you your chance," was the reply.

Then he began counting, slowly and distinctly. George stood his ground.

"Go, quick!" breathed Daisy.

"Yes, you had better go," advised Mr. Dunwald; "you cannot fight the four of them, and so can do me no good. Go, and thus save your own life."

But George shook his head decidedly, and kept his eyes on the redcoats.

Slowly the leader counted.

"Eight—nine—ten!"

He paused, gave George a grim look, and then said to his comrades:

"Fire, men!"

They did so, but even as they pulled the triggers, George made a quick leap to one side, and the bullets whistled harmlessly past him.

Then, crack, crack, his own weapons rang out, and two of the redcoats fell, one dead, the other seriously wounded.

Dropping the empty pistols, George jerked two more out of his belt and fired two more shots, dropping one of the redcoats dead, and sending the other one away at the top of his speed, slightly wounded.

George had beaten four redcoats, single-handed and alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGE MAKING HEADWAY.

It was indeed an amazing performance.

Mr. and Mrs. Dunwald and Daisy stared at the youth in open-mouthed amazement.

They could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyes.

How could one young fellow like George defeat four full grown men, soldiers, and British soldiers at that, men who had doubtless served in the army for years and perhaps in half a dozen different countries?

Yet he had done so.

He had not only defeated them; he had killed two and wounded the other two, one quite seriously, to judge by the groans he was giving utterance to.

The woman and girl were horrified by the scene. It was the first time they had encountered anything of the kind. The war had been going on more than four years, but in all that time no scenes of bloodshed had been enacted in that quiet vicinity.

Now, however, death stalked right at their very door.

"This is—oh, so—terrible!" murmured Mrs. Dunwald.

"Yes, indeed—it—is!" from Daisy.

"But they brought it on themselves," said Mr. Dunwald; "they fired at the young man first."

"Yes," said George; "I simply protected myself."

"And us at the same time," said Daisy; "oh, we are not blaming you, sir. We are only too glad that it has turned out as it has. We would rather see a dozen redcoats lying dead than one patriot."

George had doffed his uniform before coming ashore, and now had on an ordinary suit of citizen's clothing. Had he had his uniform on, the redcoats would not have parleyed with him, as they had done.

"Thank you," said George, bowing and smiling; "but how do you know I am a patriot, Miss?"

The girl pointed to the three redcoats lying on the ground, with a slight shudder, and said:

"You would not have shot them down, otherwise, I am sure;" and then she added: "And I saw you on board the sloop, when I was out there, a while ago."

George flushed and a thrill of delight went over him.

She had noticed him!

She remembered his face, and he had been only one of a hundred youths that she had seen at the same time!

The thought pleased the youth immensely.

It gave him the idea that she might learn to care for him.

"Did you?" he said, his voice trembling slightly; "I wouldn't have thought that you could have remembered my face, when you saw so many."

It was the girl's turn to blush slightly, now, and she did so, looking slightly disconcerted at the same time.

"What are you going to do with—them, father?" she asked, pointing toward the three forms lying on the ground. It was evident that she did this more to hide her discomfiture than for any other reason.

"We may as well carry the wounded man into the house," said Mr. Dunwald; "the other two we will bury later on."

"Yes, bring the wounded man in," said Mrs. Dunwald, who was a tender-hearted woman; "we will dress his wound and make him as comfortable as possible."

Mr. Dunwald and George carried the wounded man into the house, and the woman and the girl dressed the wound.

The man was seriously, but not fatally wounded, and when they had finished, he felt better.

Then the man and George went out and dug a grave and buried the two dead men in it.

"Do you think that man who escaped will be back here

with some more men, to finish up the work they were engaged upon?" asked Mr. Dunwald.

"I don't know," replied George; "it is possible, though, they would doubtless not bother you. Likely they would care only to get their hands on me."

"You are a member of the party of patriots who are on the sloop, as my daughter said?" the man asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

Then George told him how they had captured the sloop-of-war from the British.

"That was a daring feat," said Mr. Dunwald.

"Indeed it was," acknowledged George; "and that is just what may be expected of Dick Slater, every time. He delights in doing such things."

"I have heard a great deal about Dick Slater and the Liberty Boys."

They had just finished covering the forms over when they saw a dozen redcoats emerge from the timber, about one hundred yards distant, and come running toward them.

"There come some redcoats now!" exclaimed Mr. Dunwald; "you had better flee for your life."

George realized that he could not hope to contend against a dozen men, and so he turned and ran with all his might.

The redcoats yelled to him to stop, but of course he did not do so.

He ran toward the timber at the farther side of the opening in which stood the house, and he reached it before the British could get within shooting distance.

The redcoats paid no attention to Mr. Dunwald; the fact was that the slightly wounded redcoat was among them, and he was eager to catch the youth who had killed two of his comrades, seriously wounded another and given him a slight wound.

Seeing that they were in a fair way to lose their intended victim, they fired a volley at him, but the distance was too great and the bullets did not carry up.

George did not go straight ahead when he entered the timber. He was determined not to leave the vicinity of the home of the girl he fancied; he feared the redcoats might be angry because of his escape and try to get even by doing all the damage possible to Mr. Dunwald.

So he turned to the left and made his way in a semi-circle, till he was on the opposite side of the clearing from the one at which he had entered the timber.

Here he paused, took up his position behind a tree and waited and watched for the return of the redcoats.

He did not have long to wait.

The redcoats soon appeared at the edge of the clearing, and approached the house.

Mr. Dunwald was standing on the porch.

The redcoats were soon standing before him.

"Well," said the leader of the party, a frown on his face; "there have been pretty goings on here, haven't there?"

"I am not to blame for anything that has occurred," was the reply.

"Oh, of course not!" sneeringly.

"It is the truth; your men came here and started the trouble. I had nothing to do with it."

"Who was that young scoundrel who was here?"
"I don't know."

"You lie, you rebel dog!"

Mr. Dunwald's face flushed, but he answered calmly:

"You are mistaken; I do not know who he was. He is a stranger. I never saw him till the moment he appeared here, when you and your three comrades were threatening me." The leader of the party was the man who had been wounded by George.

"But you certainly know who he is; you must have found out since."

"No; we have been too busy to talk, since you ran away." "I would give a pretty penny to know who he is," the redcoat said, in a fierce voice. "I have a score to settle with him."

"Well, you cannot learn who he is from me, for I do not know his name."

The redcoat had to be satisfied with this, though it was plain that he did not wholly credit the farmer's statement.

Then he asked about the wounded man.

"He is in the house," was the reply; "we have dressed his wound, and he is resting as comfortable as might be expected."

"Is he mortally wounded?"

"I think not, if he is taken good care of."

"Will you see that this is done, if we do not bother you in any way?"

"We would not neglect any one who might be in the condition that he is in."

"Very well; we will not molest you in any way. I will go in and take a look at him."

The redcoat entered, accompanied by Mr. Dunwald.

His comrade was conscious, but very weak. He recognized his comrade, and smiled a faint welcome.

"How are you, old fellow?" the redcoat asked.

"All right, I guess," came back faintly.

"Good! Just keep up your courage, and keep your grip on life, and when you are well, we will hunt the fellow down that shot you and put an end to him."

The other smiled faintly, and nodded assent.

Then the soldier went back out of doors, and Mr. Dunwald accompanied him.

They conversed a few minutes, and then the redcoats took their leave.

George, who was watching them closely, followed at a safe distance. He was pretty sure that they had come off one of the British warships, but wished to be certain of it.

He saw the redcoats reach the shore and enter a boat; then they rowed off to one of the British warships and boarded it.

"I thought so," the youth told himself.

He watched half an hour or so, and then, seeing nothing to indicate that more redcoats were coming ashore, he made his way back to the Dunwald home.

He was given a warm welcome there, for they had not known what had become of him.

He explained that he had followed the redcoats when they went away, and that they had boarded one of the warships.

"Then it is not likely that they will come back," said Mr. Dunwald.

"I hardly think they will do so," said George.

He remained there an hour, talking to the members of the family, but looking at only one of them, and then he bade them good-by and took his departure.

He had gone only a few yards, when Daisy came out of the house and caught up with him.

"I wanted to tell you how much I thank you for what you did in father's behalf," she said, giving him a smile that made his heart leap with joy. "I want you to know that I appreciate it—that we all do."

"That is all right, Miss Dunwald," said George. "It gave me more pleasure to be able to render your father a service than it is possible for you to understand." He gave her a look, as he said this, that must have enlightened her somewhat, for she blushed like a peony and quickly turned her face away.

At the edge of the clearing she again bade George good-by, after inviting him to come again, or as often as he could. She gave him her hand, and the youth was thrilled through and through by the touch.

Acting upon impulse, he suddenly kissed the girl's hand. "Good-by," he exclaimed. "I'll be back—be sure of that!"

Then he entered the timber and strode away in the direction of the headland on which he had left Sam Sanderson.

He had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when suddenly he felt himself seized from behind and thrown to the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

BEN BURGESS.

George had been taken wholly by surprise.

He was not expecting anything of the kind, so had not been on the lookout.

He was not the youth to permit himself to be overpowered without a struggle, however, and he at once grappled with his assailant and began a struggle.

He twisted and squirmed till he had got face to face with his opponent, and then he felt that he had a chance. He was all the more confident that he would be able to at least hold his own when he got a look at his assailant, for he saw that he had to contend with a youth of about his own age.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Who are you, and why have you attacked me?"

"Ye'll find out," was the snarling reply.

"Well, that's what I want to do."

"Give up!" grated the youth.

"Oh, no! I am not that kind. If you get the better of me you will have to fight for it."

"All right; I'll do that."

Then the struggle went on.

The youth, who was undoubtedly a farmer boy of the region, was strong, but he was not a match for George Harper, who had had a lot of experience as a soldier and fighter. He soon got his opponent turned onto his back, and then, seated astride the youth, George grasped him by the throat and held his fist menacingly under his nose.

"Now tell me why you attacked me," he said sternly.

"Blamed ef I will!"

"Tell me!"

"I won't."

"If you don't you will be sorry."

"Whut'll ye do?"

"I'll smash that nose of yours all over your face!"

There was no mistaking the fact that George meant every word he said.

The youth seemed to realize this fact.

He hesitated, gulped a bit, and then mumbled out: "I seen ye—kiss—Daisy Dunwald's hand."

George started, and a look of understanding appeared in his eyes, while a half-smile appeared on his face.

"Oh, ho, that's the trouble, eh?" he exclaimed.

"Y-yas."

"What business was it of yours if I kissed the girl?"

"She's—waal—my gal."

"Oh, she is, eh?"

"Yas."

"Does she know it?"

The sarcasm of this remark was lost on the youth. He answered it in accordance with the literal meaning of the words.

"Uv course she knows it," he said.

George's lip curled in scorn. He could not believe that a bright, beautiful girl like Daisy Dunwald could possibly care for a lout like this one.

"You are a fool, or else you think I am one," he said, scornfully. "I know, if you don't, that Daisy Dunwald could not care anything for such a specimen of a fellow as you."

"Whut's that!" snarled the youth. "Blast ye, I'll—I'll—"

He made a desperate attempt to upset his conqueror and get free, but was unsuccessful.

"You can't do it, so might as well not try," said George. "I'll—settle—with ye—some day!" panted the youth.

"Now, see here," said the Liberty Boy. "Let's talk sensibly about this matter. I think that you are making a fool of yourself in attacking me as you have done."

"I don't think so."

"I do; you have no right to jump onto me simply because I kissed Daisy Dunwald's hand. It is not any business of yours, unless she has promised to be your wife, and I guess she hasn't done that."

"No, but she would ef ye'd stay erway frum heer."

"I don't think so; you are deluding yourself. She does not care for you. But if she did, I would not interfere with you, or make an attack on you. That would be foolish, and I would be doing something that I had no business to do. The girl has a right to decide, and I insist that you let it be that way. Let's call this affair ended, and an even thing, if you like, and then we will leave the matter to Daisy. If she likes you and prefers you I will not say a word, but if she likes and prefers me, you are not to say or do anything."

The youth squirmed, and did not answer at once. It was evident that he realized that he would not stand very much of a chance in fair competition with the handsome youth—for George was good-looking.

"I—I—don't—I hain't ergoin' ter make no bargains with nobuddy," the youth finally mumbled.

"Oh, all right; have it that way, if you like, but I warn you that if you try to harm me in any way in the future I will handle you in a way that you won't like."

"Ye kain't skeer me," said the youth, "an' ye got ther advantage uv me, er ye wouldn't hav beat me this time."

"Bosh!" said George. "You had all the advantage, for you jumped on my back when I wasn't looking, and when I wasn't expecting anything of the kind. And I got the better of you even then; next time I will be on the lookout, and I pity you, that's all!"

The youth grunted out something unintelligible, and then George said:

"What is your name?"

"Ben Burgess."

"All right, Ben Burgess; if you are harboring malice, and think of renewing this affair at another time, you had better learn a few prayers."

"Don' ye worry erbout me," was the growling reply.

"I'm not, but you had better worry about yourself. I'm going to let you go now, and if you know when you are well off, you will behave yourself."

"I'll look arter my own bizness."

"All right."

Then George leaped to his feet, and Ben Burgess scrambled awkwardly to his, and stood there, glaring angrily and threateningly at the Liberty Boy.

"Whut's yer name?" he asked. "Ye know mine, an' et's no more'n fair that I sh'd know your'n."

"My name is George Harper."

"All right; I'll see ye ergin, I expeck."

"Possibly."

"Ye'd better stay erway frum these parts."

"Thank you. I go and come as I please."

"Waal, that may work all right mos' uv ther time, but I don't think et'll be healthy fur ye ter fool aroun' heer very much."

"It will be as healthy for me as for you; possibly more so."

"Humph!"

Then Ben Burgess turned and strode away.

George watched him out of sight, for he did not trust the youth at all.

"He would just as lief turn around and slip up behind me and lay me out with a club as not," the Liberty Boy told himself.

Ben went in the direction of the Dunwald home, however, and George guessed that he was going to have an interview with Daisy.

"Well, let him," he said to himself. "She could never care for such an ugly specimen of a fellow as Ben Burgess. I have nothing to fear from him, I am sure."

Then he turned and strode onward in the direction of the top of the headland.

He was soon there.

Sam Sanderson was on guard.

He had been keeping a close watch on the British warships.

"What was the trouble down yonder, George?" he asked. "I saw a redcoat go aboard one of the ships, and pretty soon he went back, accompanied by about a dozen comrades. Then, half an hour ago or such matter, they went back to the ship. I heard pistol-shots, too, over toward the farmhouse. Did you get into any trouble?"

"Yes, a little; but the other fellows had the most trouble."

Then he told the story of the encounter with the four red-coats, and how he had killed two, seriously wounded another, and given the remaining one a slight wound, putting him to flight.

"Well, you did make things lively for them, didn't you?" exclaimed Sam, admiringly.

"Yes, but it was necessary that I should do so; if I hadn't downed them quickly they would have ended my days, without a doubt."

"I guess you are right."

They talked for half an hour or such matter, and then George exclaimed:

"The ships are getting under way!"

Sam looked, and then nodded assent.

"You are right," he said. "And now, the question is, which way are they going to go?"

"Downstream, likely."

"Yes, but they might go the other way."

"Well, if they do, they will have to tack, and it will take them some time to beat around the headland. We will have plenty of time in which to get down to the sloop and warn Dick."

They watched the warships eagerly.

Soon the two vessels headed downstream, and moved away, at first slowly, and then, as they got out to where the wind got a chance at the sails, faster.

"They are going downstream, Sam."

"Yes, I wonder how far they are going?"

"Hard telling; perhaps to New York city."

They remained on the headland and watched the ships.

It was possible to see down the stream five miles, and the youths waited till the warships had sailed out of sight;

then they descended to the shore, climbed into the boat, and rowed out to the sloop.

They clambered on board, and were met by Dick Slater, who looked at them inquiringly.

"Well?" he asked.

"The warships have sailed on down the river," said Sam.

"And how's Daisy, George?" grinned Bob Estabrook, who was a great tease.

"She's all right," replied George, good-naturedly.

"You saw her, then?"

"Oh, yes."

Then Dick, who had been doing some thinking, turned to the Liberty Boys, and said:

"Get to work, boys; we will sail down the river as far as we dare."

The youths were glad to hear this order. They wanted to go where there would be a chance for excitement.

The sails were soon set, and a few minutes later the sloop was heading down the river.

The British warships were not in sight, of course, and the sloop had five miles of clear water ahead of her.

CHAPTER X.

"A SPY."

"Say, Dick, I have a scheme."

"Let's hear it, Bob."

"All right; it is this: That we sail back up to West Point and about half our number go ashore, mount horses and come down the river to about even with this point. Then when the British warships bar our way on the water we will be in a position to go on down the stream, if we like, on horseback, and thus we will have no trouble in keeping track of the doings of the enemy."

"That's a good suggestion, Bob."

"I think so myself."

"Yes, there is no doubt about it."

It was evening, and the sloop had sailed up the river, and was lying to near the Dunwald home.

Dick and Bob had been standing on the deck, talking, and Bob had suddenly spoken as above, and then had ensued the conversation.

"Are you going to go at once, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes. We might as well get under way at once. The wind is against us, and it will take several hours to make the trip."

A few minutes later the sloop was moving slowly up the Hudson.

They arrived at West Point about ten o'clock, and cast anchor. They would not do anything till morning.

When morning came fifty of the youths went ashore, and bridled and saddled their horses.

Then they set out down the river.

Dick instructed them to go to the Dunwald home and go into camp.

"That will be a good place for you to have your headquarters," he said. "Then you will be in a position to move up or down the shore, as circumstances may direct."

"You will be down there on the sloop soon?" asked Mark Morrison, who was to command the fifty who were on horseback.

"Yes, the wind is favorable, and we will be there before you get there."

"All right."

Half an hour later the sloop was under way.

It sailed down the Hudson, and at last dropped anchor behind the headland, near the Dunwald home.

Dick and Bob decided to go ashore and climb to the top of the headland, to see if any warships were in sight, and George Harper asked permission to accompany them ashore.

"You don't want to go up to the top of the headland, though, do you, George?" grinned Bob.

"No; I would rather go over to a certain farmhouse not so very far away, Bob."

"That's what I thought."

"Don't stay over there more than an hour, George," said Dick.

"Oh, don't be hard on him, Dick," said Bob. "Let him stay longer, if he wants to. The boys will be there this noon, and he might as well be with them as with us on the sloop."

"That's so; say, George, I will get one of the boys to change places with you, if you wish."

"All right, Dick," eagerly. "I wish you would do so."

"I will."

Then they parted, Dick and Bob to go up to the top of the headland, while George went to the Dunwald home to see Daisy.

She happened to be out in the yard, and greeted him cordially.

"Is the sloop back again?" she asked, with interest.

"Yes, Miss Daisy."

Then George asked how the wounded redcoat was getting along.

"He is getting along very well," was the reply. "He will get well, so father says."

They talked a while longer, and then George said:

"Do you know a young fellow by the name of Ben Burgess?"

Daisy blushed, and looked somewhat disconcerted. Then she laughed and said:

"Yes, I know him well. I believe that you made his acquaintance yesterday?"

George laughed.

"Yes, we got pretty well acquainted yesterday. Did he come here after that?"

"Yes; he came here and talked a good deal, and threatened what he would do to you. You will do well to look out for him, Mr. Harper."

"Call me George, will you not?" eagerly.

"If you will call me Daisy, without the miss to it."

"All right. I shall be only too glad to do that."

Then George told her that there would be a party of Liberty Boys there about noon.

"They are going to go into camp near here," he said. "And they will be here off and on for quite a while, and then, if any redcoats come to these parts, you will be protected."

"That will be nice, George."

"Yes, it will make you safe, at any rate."

"So it will."

They talked quite a while, and then went into the house and George was greeted pleasantly by Mr. Dunwald and his wife.

They were glad to learn that there was to be a party of Liberty Boys come to the place and go into camp.

"We will feel safer," said Mrs. Dunwald.

"Yes, indeed," said Daisy.

"I shall be very glad to have them here," said Mr. Dunwald.

George remained all the morning, and was invited to take dinner.

He accepted the invitation with alacrity, for he was glad of the chance to remain that much longer.

Soon after dinner the party of Liberty Boys put in an appearance.

They had not ridden hard, and so had not got there earlier.

They selected a good place and went into camp.

George went down to the shore and saw the sloop lying at anchor. He signaled to the youths on board, and they sent a boat ashore for him.

When he was on board he told Dick that the Liberty Boys were at the Dunwald home.

"That is good," the youth said. "I guess that I will go ashore and see them, and give them a few instructions. You may come along, George, and I will get one of the boys to come back with me in your place, and you may remain there."

"Thank you, Dick."

"I guess I will go ashore with you, Dick," said Bob.

"Very well."

There were no warships in sight below the headland, and so Dick did not mind leaving the sloop. There was no danger of an attack being made on it.

They were not long in arriving at the Dunwald home.

Dick took a look at the location of the encampment, and said that it was well selected.

"You have a good position here, Mark," he declared, "and with the exercise of care, you should be able to hold it all right, unless confronted by an overwhelming force, of course."

"That's what I think, Dick."

Then Dick addressed the youths in general, and asked:

"Which one of you boys will change places with George Harper? He wants to be with the party on the land, for a certain reason which shall be nameless," with a smile.

Several of the youths spoke up promptly, and Dick

named one of them to go on board the sloop in George's place.

"Be ready to go back with Bob and I," he said.

"All right," was the reply.

Then Dick went to the house and greeted Daisy, and made the acquaintance of her father and mother.

He was more than pleased with Daisy on close acquaintance. He found her to be a bright, beautiful girl, and one that any young man might be proud to call sweetheart.

"George is to be congratulated if he has won her regards," said Dick to himself.

Later on he told George that he was to remain at the encampment, and the youth was delighted.

"Thank you, Dick," he said. "I am glad that you have done this for me."

"I should think you would be," with a smile. "Jove, George, if I didn't have a sweetheart of my own down in Westchester County I would go in and try to cut you out with Daisy. She is one of the sweetest and brightest girls I have ever seen."

"That's what she is, Dick; and I'm mighty glad you have a sweetheart, for she was talking nice about you a while ago."

"Well, I'm glad that she thinks well of me, anyway, and I congratulate you, George, and wish you success in winning her."

"I have a rival, Dick," said George, with a smile.

"Is that so? Who is he?"

Then George told about Ben Burgess, and Dick and Bob—who had just come up—laughed heartily.

"I guess you have nothing to fear from him," said Dick.

"I guess not. Daisy hates him."

"He must be about such another as Joe Scroggs, Dick," grinned Bob.

Joe Scroggs was a rough boy of the neighborhood in which Dick lived, and he was in love with Dick's sweetheart, Alice Estabrook, but of course he never received any encouragement, for Alice detested him.

"I guess he is just about such another, Bob."

They conversed for a while, and then went to the encampment.

Dick had sent a couple of youths to the top of the headland to keep watch down the river, and one arrived at the camp and said that there was a warship about two miles down the river, and that it had dropped anchor.

This gave Dick an idea.

He did not wish to risk venturing down closer with the sloop, so he decided to go down along the shore.

He named half a dozen of the youths, and they bridled and saddled their horses, and the party set out.

They rode about two miles, and then dismounted and tied their horses in the timber, a hundred yards from the road.

This done, they made their way toward the river.

They were soon standing on the shore, on top of a bluff,

and they were screened from the observation of the redcoats on the warship by the trees, undergrowth, and rocks.

They watched the ship ten or fifteen minutes, and everything seemed to be quiet on board.

"I wonder why the ship is there?" said Bob.

"Perhaps the British think they may be able to entice us into an engagement, and that they will get to sink us," said Dick.

"Possibly. Well, they will find that they are mistaken in thinking thus."

"So they will."

The youths were still engaged in watching the ship when suddenly George Harper plucked Dick by the sleeve.

"Look yonder!" he said in an excited whisper.

Dick looked in the direction indicated, and saw a young fellow perhaps twenty years of age standing down on the sandy shore, about fifty feet distant.

When they first saw him he was simply standing there, looking toward the warship, but now he drew a handkerchief from his pocket and waved it.

The youths looked quickly toward the ship, and saw some one wave a handkerchief in return.

"A spy!" exclaimed Bob, in an excited whisper.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ENCOUNTER.

"You are right," agreed Dick.

"Who do you suppose the fellow is?" asked George.

"I haven't any idea," from Dick. "Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"Ben Burgess."

"Oh, the youth who is your rival for the hand of Daisy?"

"The same."

"Look yonder!" whispered Bob, pointing toward the ship.

The youths did so.

A boat was putting off from the warship.

"They are coming to hold an interview with the spy," said Dick.

"So they are," agreed Bob.

"But we must interfere and put a stop to the affair."

"Yes, we must capture the spy."

"And let's do it before the redcoats reach the shore."

"I'm afraid we can't get there in time; it is too steep to get down here, and we will have to go along the shore quite a distance before we can get down."

"Well, let's get there as quickly as possible."

They hastened away, being careful not to make any noise, and when they came to a place where they could get down the bluff they did so.

Then they hastened along the shore, keeping in among the trees and underbrush.

They were still fifty yards distant when a boat with a small sail from the warship reached the shore.

By hurrying, however, the Liberty Boys were enabled to get to the scene before the redcoats could make a landing, and they did not hesitate an instant, but got to work at once.

Bob caught the spy by the arm and stuck a pistol against his head. The other Liberty Boys ran into the water, seized the painter, and began pulling the boat toward the shore.

The British struck out lustily with oars and pistol-butts.

The youths protected themselves as well as possible, and soon had the boat drawn up on the sand.

The redcoats now opened fire on the Liberty Boys, but they were so excited and angry by the turn affairs had taken that they did not take aim, and so no particular damage was done. One of the youths was wounded.

There were four of the redcoats, but they were no match for the half dozen Liberty Boys, who leaped into the boat and overpowered the British quickly.

By this time there were the signs of excitement to be observed on board the warship.

The soldiers and sailors had seen that something out of the ordinary was going on, and a couple of boats were dropped into the water quickly, and were as quickly filled with sailors and soldiers.

Then the boats were rowed swiftly toward the shore.

The Liberty Boys saw what was taking place, however, and had no intention of permitting themselves to be caught.

Bob had bound the hands of Ben Burgess by the time the other youths had done the same with the redcoats, and now all hastened away, with the five prisoners in their midst.

The redcoats tried to hold back, for they knew their comrades were coming, but the youths jerked them along without ceremony.

The party reached the top of the bluff by the time the two boats reached the shore, and then it was not such hard work to get the prisoners along.

The horses were reached, in due time, and then the prisoners were placed in the saddles; the youths mounted behind, and then set out up the road at a gallop.

They had gone about a quarter of a mile when they heard yells behind them.

They looked back and saw a score of redcoats in the road, waving their arms wildly.

"Oh, yell, you redcoated rascals!" cried Bob; "you can't catch us now."

"No, we are safe for the present," said Dick; "a large force may come ashore from a warship and come on up and attack us, however."

"I don't think they will do so."

On the youths dashed.

They soon were out of sight of the redcoats, and half an hour later arrived at the encampment.

The Liberty Boys were surprised when their comrades appeared, bringing the prisoners with them.

They asked eager questions.

The youths answered the questions promptly, and then Dick named five youths who were to take the prisoners to West Point.

When Ben Burgess found that he was to be held a prisoner and be taken to West Point, he turned pale and began to plead.

"Don' send me up theer," he said; "I hain't done nothin'."

"But we saw you," said Dick; "you waved a handkerchief at the redcoats on the warship, they waved one at you in response, and then came ashore in the boat. You were going to give them some information, and that is what constitutes a spy."

"Whut'll they do with me?"

"Hang you, likely," said Bob Estabrook, cheerfully.

"Well, it is not certain that they will hang him, Bob," said Ben Spurlock, who often capped for Bob; "they may decide to shoot him instead. It is so much trouble to hang one."

"That's so," agreed Bob, gravely. "That will be better for you, Ben Burgess."

"I don' see et thet way," he grumbled; "et'll be death eether way, won' et?"

"Well, yes, likely it will."

Ben did not have anything more to say. He grew very pale, however, and it was evident that he was doing considerable thinking.

The party of Liberty Boys set out, with the prisoners riding extra horses, and soon disappeared around a bend in the road.

Not long after they had gone one of the two youths who were on the top of the headland, as lookout, came to the encampment and told Dick that several boatloads of redcoats had been landed from the warship.

"That means that they are coming up this way to try to find and attack us," said Dick; "well, well, we will try to make it lively for them. Bob, go aboard the sloop and bring all the boys ashore, save four, who will remain on board to take care of the vessel."

"All right, Dick; that means that we are going to show fight, eh?"

"Yes; I don't think there will be many more redcoats than we have men, and we will be able to hold our own against them, and possibly we may do even better."

"Probably so, Dick."

Bob hastened to go aboard the sloop.

Half an hour later he was back, and forty-four Liberty Boys were with him.

This made nearly a hundred of the youths, and they set out down the road to meet the British.

When they came to a place where the road crossed a sort

of hill, Dick decided to stop and wait the coming of the enemy.

"This will be as good a place for a fight as any we could find," he said.

"You are right, Dick," agreed Bob.

So they scattered out, each youth taking up his position behind a tree, and then they waited patiently for the coming of the redcoats.

They did not have their patience tried very severely. The redcoats soon put in an appearance.

There were about a hundred of them, and they were coming along at a moderate pace.

They did not suspect that they were in danger, judging by their actions. They were marching along, talking aloud, and even laughing.

All this was put a stop to suddenly, however.

The Liberty Boys fired a volley, and dropped a dozen or more of the enemy.

Shouts and groans went up from the redcoats, and they fired a volley in return.

It was fired at random, of course, and so did not do much damage.

Then, to the surprise of the Liberty Boys, the redcoats came charging toward them, yelling like demons.

This was something unusual for redcoats, and the Liberty Boys hardly knew what to think. They saw a tall man in the lead, brandishing a sword and yelling to his men to come on, and realized that this man was responsible for the actions of the men.

"Give it to them with the pistols," cried Dick.

The youths obeyed, and two volleys were fired in rapid succession.

This had the effect of causing the enemy to pause, and falter.

"Now a couple of more volleys with the pistols!" cried Dick.

The youths obeyed, and fired two volleys in rapid succession.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Estabrook. "After them, boys!"

The youths charged down after the fleeing redcoats, and chased them quite a ways. Then they returned to the place where the engagement had taken place, and took a survey of the scene.

They counted the redcoats dead and wounded, and found that there were thirty of them.

Of these eighteen were dead, and twelve were wounded.

While they were engaged in looking over the field, a redcoat put in an appearance, bearing a flag of truce.

Dick went to meet him.

"My commander sent me to ask if you would permit us to come and carry away our wounded and bury the dead," he said.

"Certainly," said Dick; "it will save us a lot of trouble."

Then the redcoat went back to report, and Dick and the Liberty Boys withdrew. A number of the youths had received wounds, but fortunately none of them were serious.

The redcoats came and buried their dead and carried the wounded away with them.

Dick and Bob followed them, and kept watch till they saw them go aboard the warship; then the youths returned to where the Liberty Boys were waiting their coming.

"I guess we may as well go back to the encampment," said Dick; "there is nothing more for us to do here."

So they set out, and were soon at their destination.

The forty-four youths who had come ashore from the sloop went back, and Dick and Bob went with them.

The two youths who were on top of the headland, as lookouts, came to the sloop, and reported that the warship had raised anchor and was sailing down the river, and so Dick gave the order to get the sloop under way.

This was done, and they sailed around the headland and came in sight of the enemy.

"Let's try a few shots at her, Dick," said Bob.

"All right."

The gunners manned the gun, after the sloop had swung around, with the stern toward the enemy, and several shots were fired, two of which did some damage, one cutting off the top of a small spar and one cutting a great hole through the mainsail.

The British warship returned the fire, but none of the shots came anywhere near the sloop.

When the warship was out of range, the Liberty Boys set sail once more, and headed northward toward West Point.

CHAPTER XII.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

When the sloop arrived at West Point Dick went ashore and to headquarters, to report to General Washington.

The general received him cordially.

He heard the youth's report, and then complimented him on the work he had done.

"I am glad that you have come just at this time," he said; "for I have some work that I wish you might be able to do."

"I shall be glad to do anything you wish done, your excellency; that is, if it is anything that I can do."

The commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments, a thoughtful look on his face. Then he said, slowly:

"The work which I wish you to do is something extremely difficult and dangerous, Dick. Indeed, I don't know whether it is possible to do it at all. I will tell you what it is, and then you can see what you think about it."

"Very well, sir."

"As you may have heard, Dick, I am looking for the arrival of a French fleet, which is expected to co-operate with us, and help defeat the British in America. It is about time for the fleet to be in the vicinity of New York, and what I was thinking of having you do, was to sail down the Hudson, out through the bay and Narrows, into the

ocean, where, if you should find the fleet there, you could see the admiral and bring me some valuable information."

The commander-in-chief paused and looked at Dick searchingly and inquiringly.

"What do you think of it?" he asked, after a few moments of silence; "is it at all feasible, or will it be too risky to attempt?"

Dick was thinking deeply. He was only a young fellow, true, but he had a man's head on his shoulders, and his judgment was always good.

He was turning the matter over and over in his mind and giving it consideration from every standpoint.

"I believe it can be done, sir," he said, presently; "that is to say, I am sure that it is possible to accomplish it."

"I am glad to hear you say that, and now are you willing to attempt the feat?"

"I am."

Dick spoke positively.

"And your Liberty Boys—will they be willing to take the risk?"

"Oh, yes; I can answer for them, sir. They will be glad to attempt the feat, dangerous though it may be. They will go anywhere and dare anything that I ask them to."

"Very well; then you may make the attempt."

They talked awhile longer, the commander-in-chief giving Dick instructions, and then the youth got ready to take his departure.

"You think that you will make the attempt to-night, then?" asked the general.

"Yes, if the wind is right, and I think it will be."

Then General Washington bade the Liberty Boy good-by, and wished him success, after which Dick took his departure.

He hastened to go back on board the sloop.

When he got there he found the boys seated in the cabin, talking, laughing, and joking with one another. That was one nice thing about the Liberty Boys; they got along together in the best manner imaginable. There was no quarrelling, and no jealousies. They were pleasant and jolly all the time.

"Hello, Dick; what is the news?" asked Bob.

"I have some news," replied Dick; "and from your standpoint it would be called good news."

"Is that so? Why would it be called good news from my standpoint, more than from yours or the others?"

"Because it is something that means danger for all of us."

"Let us hear what it is, then."

"All right." Then Dick told them what the commander-in-chief wished them to do.

The Liberty Boys were delighted.

"That is just the thing!"

"Say, that will be all right."

"That will be something to do, boys!"

"Say, that will be something to talk about, if we succeed in doing it."

Such were a few of the exclamations.

"Then you are willing to make the attempt to run past the British warships and get out into the ocean?" asked Dick.

"Yes, yes."

"We will enjoy it."

Dick had been sure of this, anyway, but he was glad to hear the youths say that they were willing to undertake the affair.

"When are we going to start?" asked Bob.

"Right away after supper," said Dick. "That will enable us to have light as far down as the home of the Dunwalds; and after that we will have the dark, and so will be enabled to get past the British warships—if we have good luck."

This met with the approval of the youths, and after they had eaten supper they began getting ready for the trip down the river.

The sloop was gotten under way, and then sailed down the stream, moving along at a moderate pace, the wind being fair.

Dick had sized the matter up about right; it came dark just about the time they came to the headland, near which lay the Dunwald home. Here the sloop was brought to, and Dick and Bob went ashore.

They made their way to the Liberty Boys encampment, and Dick told the youths what he and those aboard the sloop were going to try to do.

"You stay here and keep a sharp lookout for the red-coats," he said. "We may get back in safety in a day or two; but if we should not, why return to West Point and stay there till you do learn what has become of us."

"All right," said Mark Morrison, who was to remain in command of the force of Liberty Boys.

Then Dick and Bob said good-by and went back on board the sloop.

Dick gave the order, and the sloop was gotten under way.

The three youths who were to have the wheel were at their post, and they were confident that they could guide the sloop down past the British warships, dark though it was.

The sloop rounded the headland, and then sailed straight down the stream.

The youth at the wheel knew his business, and was enabled to guide the vessel aright without much trouble.

On the sloop sailed, and it was not until it was well down toward the city that the lights of a British warship were seen.

"Now we will have to look out," said Dick.

"So we will," agreed Bob.

Then Dick went to the youth at the wheel and told him to be very careful.

"Give the warship as wide a berth as possible," he said.

"All right, Dick," was the reply. "I will run over close to the west shore, for the water is deep, and there is no danger of getting aground."

They passed the warship without being discovered.

It was quite dark, and the palisades and bluffs made dark backgrounds against which it was impossible to see a dark body like that of the sloop.

In this manner the little vessel passed the warships one after another, and at last was down opposite the city.

Here was where the most danger lay, for the youths at the wheel were not familiar with the bay, and would have to run somewhat at random.

The youths were confident, however, that they could make their way through the bay and out through the Narrows in safety, providing they did not arouse the men on the British warships and have to run the gauntlet of cannon balls.

The youths at the wheel guided the sloop skilfully, and managed to get out into the bay, and well down toward the Narrows before they were discovered. Then they had to run so close to a warship that they were seen, and the alarm was given.

The British gunners went to work, and shot after shot was fired. Some of the cannon balls came perilously near the sloop, but fortunately they did not strike it.

The boys at the wheel guided the sloop, by watching the dark shores on either side, and got safely through the Narrows.

As soon as they had accomplished this they breathed freely.

They felt jubilant, for they had done a most remarkable thing.

They kept on till the sloop was well out in the ocean, and then the work of killing time and watching for some signs of the expected French fleet was begun.

The sloop sailed first one way and then another, all night long.

When morning came the youths scanned the horizon for a sight of sails, but not one was visible.

The French fleet had not yet arrived.

"What are we going to do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"We are going to stay out here and wait and watch for the coming of the fleet, Bob."

"That is what I supposed you would do."

The youths sailed up and down the coast all day long, and when night came they had not sighted any sails.

"Say, Dick," said Bob, while they were eating supper, "suppose a bad storm should blow up? What would become of us?"

"Oh, I guess we could ride it out, old fellow; the sloop is a strong and seaworthy vessel."

"Yes, it seems to be."

They talked a while longer, and then the matter of getting back past the warships and up the Hudson river came up.

"How are we ever going to manage that, Dick?" Bob wanted to know.

"Well, we will have to manage it the same as we did in coming out."

"But it will be much more difficult, Dick."

"Why so?"

"Because the redcoats will be on the lookout for us, don't you think?"

"Yes, likely they will."

The sloop beat along the coast all that night, going first one way and then the other, and when morning came the Liberty Boys again scanned the horizon for sails.

None were in sight.

"I don't believe the French fleet is coming," said Bob.

"I think it will be here sooner or later," said Dick.

"Well, it looks as though it is going to be later, instead of sooner."

Dick laughed.

"Be patient, Bob," he said. "We will see the French fleet before long, I am sure—perhaps before night."

He was right. About four o'clock in the afternoon the lookout up in the bow called down:

"I see sails—several of them!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATE OF THE SLOOP.

The Liberty Boys were greatly excited at once.

"It must be the French fleet!" cried Bob.

"Quite likely!" from Dick.

Then he climbed aloft and took a look.

Several sails were visible in the distance, and while they watched others kept appearing, until the youth counted twenty-seven.

"Yes, it is the French fleet," said Dick at last. "Well, I am glad of it."

Then he descended to the deck, and there they waited till the fleet was near enough so that the flagship could be made out; then Dick ordered that the sloop be headed for the flagship.

This was done, and an hour later the sloop was hauled to not far from the vessel in question.

A quarter boat was lowered, and Dick and several of the youths got into it, and rowed to the flagship.

When they were alongside the vessel a rope-ladder was lowered, and Dick climbed up to the deck.

The sailors did not understand Dick when he spoke to them, for they were Frenchmen.

"That's something I hadn't taken into consideration," thought Dick.

He knew they would understand a name, however, and so he spoke the name of the French admiral, Count d'Estaing, and the sailors at once bowed, and one motioned for Dick to follow him.

The youth did so, and was soon in the cabin.

A little while later he was ushered into the admiral's presence, and was greatly pleased to find himself greeted in English.

"My name is Dick Slater, sir," said Dick, "and I am a messenger from General Washington."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Slater," was the reply, "and what news do you bring me from your commander-in-chief?"

"I have a letter here, sir."

Dick drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to the count.

The latter opened the letter and read the contents eagerly and interestedly.

When he had finished, he looked down at the floor and seemed to be pondering.

Presently he looked up.

"General Washington wishes us to co-operate with his army," the count said. "But I am afraid that our heaviest vessels will not go over the sandbar which stretches across your outer harbor, in which event we will be unable to do as your commander-in-chief wishes."

"When will you test the matter?" asked Dick.

"It may as well be done at once."

"Yes, and then I will be able to carry back the news to General Washington."

"So you will."

Two of the biggest warships were sent to test the matter of the depth of the water, and they worked for several hours, in an attempt to find a place where the sandbar could be crossed, but without avail. The water was too shallow everywhere.

Count d'Estaing was greatly disappointed.

"Without my heaviest warships it would be folly to enter the harbor and attempt to cope with the British fleet," he said; "and so, although I dislike to do so, I judge that I must send word to your commander-in-chief that I cannot co-operate with him."

"He will be greatly disappointed," said Dick.

"And so am I greatly disappointed, Mr. Slater; if I could have entered the harbor with all my ships, then I would have been glad to offer battle to the British; as it is, I shall have to stay away and avoid an encounter—unless, indeed, the British could be induced to come out into the open water and give me battle."

Dick shook his head.

"I don't think there is much hope of their doing that," he said.

"I am sure they would not do it; so the only thing I can do is to go back to the West Indies."

"Then I may as well go back to General Washington and tell him the news," said Dick.

"Yes; I will write him a letter."

"Thank you; that will be best."

Count d'Estaing wrote a letter and sealed it and gave it to Dick, who placed it in his pocket.

Then he bade the Count good-by and returned to the sloop.

A little later the French fleet sailed away, but the sloop remained where it was, for the youths would not dare to enter the harbor in the daytime.

They sailed back and forth during the rest of the day,

and when night came they decided to make an attempt to re-enter the bay and slip past the British warships.

It was going to be a dark night, but clear, and it would be possible to see the dark hills and bluffs on either side, which would make it possible to steer the sloop along in safety.

The wind was from the ocean, and so it would be as good a time as they would have, in all likelihood.

Soon after dark the sloop was headed in toward the Narrows.

As they neared this natural gateway to the bay, they became eager and somewhat excited.

They realized that they were going to undertake a very difficult and dangerous undertaking.

True, they had come out in safety, but then the redcoats were unsuspicious that such an attempt was to be made; now they would be on the lookout, for they knew the sloop was outside the harbor and readily guessed that it would sooner or later be trying to get back past them.

The Liberty Boys did not hesitate, however.

They were determined to enter the harbor and get past the British warships, however, if such a thing were possible.

Closer and closer they came to the Narrows.

At last they passed the entrance and were in the harbor. Now the real danger began.

The youth at the wheel held the sloop well over toward the Staten Island shore, and every eye on the vessel was at work scanning the surroundings for the lights of the warships, or for the dark hulls of the vessels—it being shrewdly suspected that the British might not put out the lights, in the expectation of making it next to impossible for the sloop to get past them without being discovered.

The youths had remarkably keen eyes, and they managed to make out the hulls of the warships in time to pass the word to the boy at the wheel, who altered the sloop's course each time and gave the warships as wide berth as possible.

The sloop had passed four of the vessels before its presence in the harbor was discovered, and then there was a sudden transformation.

On the vessel in the harbor lights flashed up.

Kettles filled with pitch and tied in the rigging were set on fire, and they flamed up, throwing out considerable light over the waters.

The Liberty Boys stared in amazement.

"Great guns," gasped Bob; "we are in for it now!"

"I guess you are right, old man," agreed Dick.

"They will sink us, sure as anything!"

"I fear so."

Then Dick told the youths to be ready to take to the water at any moment.

"We are all good swimmers," he said; "and I think that if the redcoats do sink the sloop we will be able to get safely to the shore."

The youths said they thought so.

"And when you reach the shore make straight for the encampment near the Dunwald home," Dick instructed

them. "If the sloop goes down and we have to take to the water, it will be a game of every fellow look out for himself, but I want that we shall all get together again within a few days time."

"Oh, we will get to the shore safely, Dick," said Bob.

Then Dick instructed the youth at the wheel to hold the sloop on her course, no matter what happened, and if the redcoats crippled the vessel to run her as close to the west shore of the Hudson as possible.

The youth said he would do so.

Then the British gunners on all the warships opened fire at the sloop, and the cannon balls began spattering around the brave little vessel.

"Say, it seems to be raining cannon balls!" said Bob Estabrook, with a grin. Nothing could ruffle his serenity. He was in his element when danger threatened the most.

Soon a cannon ball cut the top off the mast and down the piece came, dragging ropes and sails with it.

This crippled the speed of the little vessel to such an extent that only slow progress could be made.

"I guess that settles it," said Dick sadly; "we will never get back to West Point with the sloop."

"No, we will have to take to the water, sooner or later, said Bob.

This proved to be the case. Presently a cannon ball struck the sloop right at the water line, and the water poured in through the hole, and the hold began filling.

The sloop soon began to settle into the water, and this had the effect of still further retarding the vessel's progress.

A little later the sloop refused to move forward, and began to settle slowly but surely into the water.

"She's going down!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes, we may as well take to the water," said Dick.

The youths did so, and as they were seen leaping overboard shouts of triumph went up from the throats of the redcoats on the warships.

The British gunners kept on firing, but aimed at the youths swimming toward the west shore of the Hudson.

Of course, it would have been only by accident that they hit a youth, but they kept up the firing in the hope that a random shot might do the work.

Some of the cannon balls did come pretty near hitting some of them. One struck within ten feet of Ben Spurlock, and splashed water all over his head.

"That was a pretty close call," said the youth to himself.

Dick and Bob remained close together, and as they happened to be in a streak of light made by a burning pitch kettle, swam rapidly to a point where they would be shielded by the darkness.

When they reached the dark spot, they kept on swimming, even though the course led toward the city.

They made up their minds that they would be about as safe in making a landing there as in trying to reach the west shore of the Hudson, so they swam steadily toward the lower end of Manhattan Island.

On they swam, making very fair progress when it was

taken into consideration that they were weighted down with their clothing, and at last they were within a few rods of the shore.

They saw that the lower end of the island, from Bowling Green to the edge of the water, was thronged with people who had been attracted there by the exciting scene out in the bay, and so the youths swam on up the East River, till they reached a point where no one seemed to be.

Here they made a landing, but they had not gone far before they were startled by hearing yells close at hand.

"Here are some of the rebels!" cried a voice; "they have just crawled out of the water. After them! Capture them! They must not be permitted to get away!"

The youths glanced back, and, outlined against the lights made by the illumination in the harbor, they saw half a dozen redcoats coming after them on the run.

"Away with you, Bob!" cried Dick.

They struck out, and ran at the top of their speed.

CHAPTER XIV.

BACK AT HEADQUARTERS.

They ran swiftly, in spite of the fact that their clothing was wet and much heavier than ordinarily the case.

They were splendid runners, and under ordinary circumstances would have had no trouble in getting away from their pursuers; but now they were very tired—were almost exhausted, in fact—as a result of their long and hard swim, and they could not run as fast as they could have done, but for this. And, too, they could not hold out to run long.

This was the worst feature, for they soon were forced to slacken their speed, with the result that the redcoats began gaining on them.

"I am afraid they will get us, Dick," panted Bob.

"I'm afraid so, Bob."

"We will keep on running till the very last, though."

"Yes; we won't give up till we have to."

They turned one corner after another, and presently Dick uttered an exclamation.

"What is it, old fellow?" from Bob.

"There is the Guinell home, Bob!"

Bob gave utterance to an exclamation in his turn.

"You are right, Dick! Maybe they will let us in, and hide us."

"Let's try it, at any rate."

The house in question was only a few doors from the corner, and the pursuing redcoats had not yet come in sight.

The Liberty Boys leaped up the steps and pounded on the door in an imperative manner.

There were quick footsteps within, and then the rattle of a bolt as it was withdrawn; then the door opened.

The youths leaped through the doorway, and pushed the door shut, and bolted it.

Then they saw that they were standing in the presence of Bernice Guinell. A candle was burning in a holder on a stand near at hand, thus making it possible to see distinctly.

"Thanks, Miss Guinell," said Dick; "you have done us a great favor by letting us in here so promptly. You have undoubtedly saved us from capture."

"I am glad of it, and you do not owe me any thanks; I am only repaying you for what you did for me, not long ago."

"But that was a pleasure to us," said Bob.

"Well, this is a pleasure to me."

At this moment there came a knock on the door.

"The redcoats!" whispered Dick; "I hope they did not see us enter here."

"I don't think they did," said Bob; "they are just trying a few houses at random, I think."

"Go into the parlor," whispered Bernice; "and I will join you there as soon as I get father here to open the door."

"Very well."

The youths entered the parlor, and stood there till the girl came in and joined them. They heard a man's voice call out, "Who is there?" and knew it belonged to Mr. Guinell.

"Come over here to the alcove," whispered Bernice; "and then, if the redcoats should enter and search for you, we can go down into the secret room, as we did the other time."

"Very well," replied Dick.

They were soon in the alcove, and then they heard the door open, and there was considerable talk between the men at the door and Mr. Guinell.

The men went away, however, and did not enter the house. It was as Bob had said; they did not see the youths enter, and were making inquiries at a number of houses.

When they had gone, Bernice and the youths came forth, and Mr. Guinell greeted them cordially.

"So you were on board the sloop that was sunk, eh?" he remarked, when he had heard their story.

"Yes," replied Dick.

Their host insisted that they should remain over night, and they decided to do so, for they were very tired, and this would give their clothing time to dry.

They remained all night, and all next day, for it would not have done for them to try to get away in the daytime.

When night came, however, they bade good-by to Mr. Guinell and Bernice and took their departure.

They left the city, and walked northward.

They stopped at a farmhouse near the Harlem River and hired a couple of horses, and after this they made good headway.

They reached the patriot headquarters, and waited till morning, when they went to General Washington and Dick gave him the letter from Count d'Estaing.

The commander-in-chief read the letter, and it was plain that he was greatly disappointed.

"I feared that the big warships could not cross the sand bar," he said; "well, that plan will have to be abandoned."

Then he turned to the youths and asked to hear the story of their adventures.

Dick told the story, briefly and clearly, and modestly withal.

"So your sloop was sunk in New York harbor?" exclaimed the commander-in-chief. "Well, well! That is too bad."

Then he asked if any of the Liberty Boys had been killed.

"None were killed by the shots of the British," was the reply; "but some of them may have been drowned. I am going down to where the other Liberty Boys are encamped, at once, and find out. I told them to come up there if they got away safely. I hope to find them all there."

After some further conversation Dick and Bob took their departure, and they at once crossed the river to West Point. Here they bridled and saddled their own horses, which had been there several weeks, and mounting, rode down the west shore of the Hudson.

They rode at a swift pace, and arrived at the encampment near the Dunwald home about ten o'clock.

To the great joy of both Dick and Bob they found all the Liberty Boys there. Not one of the youths had lost his life.

"But we had begun to think that you and Bob had gone under," said Sam Sanderson.

Then the youths told how they had landed in New York City, and had been chased, and had taken refuge in the home of the Guinells, where they had remained all night and all day.

"This is what made us late in getting here," said Dick. But now all was well.

All the Liberty Boys were there, safe and sound, and there was indeed cause that they should congratulate themselves on their good fortune.

Dick went to the Dunwald home and was cordially received by Mr. and Mrs. Dunwald and Daisy.

"I am sorry you lost your sloop," said the girl.

"So am I," smiled Dick; "but it did good service, while we had it."

While Dick was talking a Liberty Boy put in an appearance and told him that a British warship had cast anchor just below the headland, and that a force was coming ashore.

"How strong a force?" asked Dick.

"More than two hundred had landed when I came away; and they were still at work."

"Jove, that will be too strong a force for us. We had better break camp and retire toward the north."

He bade the girl and her parents good-by and hastened away to give the order.

Half an hour later the Liberty Boys were moving toward the north.

The British learned that the Liberty Boys were retreating, and followed, hoping to overtake them.

Dick had scouts behind the main force of the Liberty Boys, and so he soon knew that they were being followed.

He decided to give the redcoats a little touch of battle the first good opportunity; presently he ordered the youths to

halt. They were on the top of a ridge, and on the side the redcoats would come from the slope was pretty steep.

"We will wait here and give the British a bit of a surprise," said Dick.

This pleased the youths.

They were right in for it.

They got ready to receive the redcoats.

They stationed themselves in such a manner as would make it practically impossible for the British to do them injury, and they waited.

Presently the redcoats were seen coming.

Their red coats made them conspicuous and easy to see.

On they came, and it was not until they were halfway up the slope that they knew they were in danger; then the Liberty Boys fired a volley and dropped a number of the enemy.

This enraged the redcoats, and they charged wildly up the slope.

They knew they outnumbered the Liberty Boys so strongly that it would be impossible for them to hold out, and so they charged determinedly. The youths did not intend to try to hold their ground, however; they simply wished to do all the damage they could and then get away.

So they fired two pistol-volleys in quick succession and then retreated.

Those who were on foot went first and ran with all their might, and those who had horses remained behind to fire a couple more volleys, after which they mounted their horses and rode away at a gallop.

The redcoats had not succeeded in inflicting any damage whatever upon the youths.

This enraged them, as a matter of course, and they were more determined than ever to catch up with the rebels and punish them for their temerity.

This was not easy to do, however; in the first place, the Liberty Boys were younger, livelier and more able to march than were their older enemies, and too, they knew the ground thoroughly, while the redcoats did not.

This made it a comparatively easy matter for the youths to keep out of the way of their enemy.

They continued the retreat, and at last the redcoats gave it up and turned back.

They were disappointed, but had to make the best of the matter.

The Liberty Boys went on up to West Point, for they did not know but General Washington might want them for something or other.

Dick went over and had an interview with the commander-in-chief, who told the youth to go down the river and

keep a watch on the British warships and to send word if one or more vessels should come farther north than the headland near the Dunwald home.

"Very well, sir," said Dick.

He went back and told the youths what the commander-in-chief had said, and they were very well pleased; George Harper, needless to say, was delighted. He would get to be near his sweetheart once more.

The Liberty Boys went back down there and went into camp.

They remained there two weeks and kept close watch over the Hudson. Once or twice warships ascended the river till they were above the headland and Dick sent word to the commander-in-chief each time. This enabled the general to get things in readiness for a battle at the fort, in case the British came up and made an attack; but they did not do so, and all was well.

Later on the Liberty Boys went over on the Connecticut coast, on Long Island Sound, to protect some of the towns there, so the story of "The Liberty Boys on the Hudson" is practically ended.

At the close of the war George Harper and Daisy Dunwald were married.

Ben Burgess was not hanged or shot as a spy, but was set free later on, owing to the fact that he was young and was not a soldier.

He was glad to escape, and became a better youth than he had been. He never bothered Daisy after that.

Bernice Guinell made the acquaintance of a Liberty Boy by the name of Fred Forrest before the war was ended, and, having fallen in love with each other, they were married at the close of the war.

Lieutenant Colson was killed in a battle a few months after his encounter with Dick Slater in New York City.

THE END.

The next number (187) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AT GERMANTOWN; or, GOOD WORK IN A GOOD CAUSE," by Harry Moore.

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